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Coming together, falling apart: How automobility disrupts communicative action.

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Coming Together, Falling Apart
how automobility disrupts communicative action

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes that those aspects of life that arise and are intensified by our current dependency on the automobile (termed 'automobility') is antithetical to the development and maintenance of our capacities for moral reasoning and conversation. Three tendencies of automobility are drawn from the literature: 1) the dispersion and fragmentation of opportunities for discursive interaction; 2) an individualistic conception of social members, which is fostered by heightened isolation; and 3) the privatization of the substantive issues associated with automobility. Habermas and Benhabib's discourse ethics is used as a framework for addressing the following questions: 1) what is important about discursive interaction?; 2) how do our conceptions of subjectivity influence our interactions with others?; and 3) how does treating issues associated with automobility as those of private concern influence our ability, as a society, to discover the necessary aspects of a morally justified coordination of action (or way of life)? Located in the tradition of critical theory, Habermas' work connects issues of rationality, moral validity, normative legitimacy, and potential for emancipatory social conditions. Benhabib reconceptualizes the definition of the moral point of view that adheres in discourse ethics, and argues that the necessary orientation towards the generalized other in moral-practical discourses does not preclude a simultaneous orientation towards the concrete other. In terms of mobility practices and services, the priorities and justifications of existing policy must be challenged. Prioritizing flexible mobility as a good to be maximized subordinates other forms of social action to that purpose, while systems that minimize mobility reflect a priority of enhancing participatory life, which involves increased communicative action. Automobility is problematic for the very reason that it disrupts communicative action, and the justificatory force of discourse.

DEDICATION

With love and respect, I dedicate this thesis to my parents.

To my mom, Lorna, for encouraging me by example to be deliberate and compassionate in my thoughts and actions. Thank you for being such a wonderful mother and friend.

To my dad, Myles, for helping me live life with confidence and curiosity. It has been, and continues to be, a joy having you as a father and a friend.

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INTRODUCTION

We are, today, presented with a problem which is both ubiquitous and subtle. We are surrounded at every turn by automobiles, and all the paraphernalia, notions, norms, institutions, and mechanisms that foster their growth in numbers. On one hand, it is the automobile that carries us away; we have reached a state of frenzied and constant motion. On the other hand, we cannot seem to escape its company. We are cornered when we think we are free. We lose so much in its wake, and yet, hail all that it provides. Is the way of life afforded us by this population of technological forms really what we seek? How can we judge?

There is an explicit recognition that the good life involves the ability to access those places that supply us with education, work, food, things that we use in our everyday lives, the people who we love, need, or count on. Our lives are even better with an ability to spontaneously (or in the process of enacting a plan) get in a car and drive to some personally sought after destination. When others in the world are often either forced to move or forced to stay, we, in more technologically developed societies, may choose our paths of travel. The automobile enables those choices.

When described in such a way, circumstances seem straightforward. Yet, perhaps because of this apparent transparency of the issues, there are many implications of automobile use that remain unquestioned. When our very ways of life rest upon certain technologies, institutions, or norms, questioning the taken-for-granted justifications for their existence brings to light the contingency of claims about what the good life entails. It is exactly because our individual freedom rests on how and to what extent we may

interact with those upon who we depend that it is necessary to scrutinize the means by which we are able to do so. There are several aspects to automobile use that effectively dampen an ability to critically assess the influence that such use has upon our ways of life. Interaction between social members becomes more instrumentally enacted, less spontaneous, and less oriented towards mutual understanding, that is, interaction becomes less discursive. Again, how can we discover whether we are right in our claims about what the good life entails when the means for discovering such truths, discursive interaction, is disrupted by the very mode that we use to satisfy the requirements of that way of life?

This thesis contributes to this debate. I will claim that those aspects of life that arise and are intensified by our current dependency on the automobile for transportation (termed "automobility") is antithetical to the development and maintenance of our capacities for moral conversation. The capacity to engage in moral conversation involves moral insight, which does not arise spontaneously but develops within and through our relations with others. We become individuals through processes of socialization. The modes of interaction that occur in those processes invoke different forms of self-other relations. Personal identity, including the capacity for moral judgment, is contingent on one's socio-historical network of relations with others. By disrupting discursive interaction between social members, automobility contributes to social disintegration, anomie and alienation.

There is a fair amount of literature on the costs of current uses of automobiles. This extends from environmental degradation (at several stages of production and use) to rising health costs (because of illness and fatalities) to social stratification (reflected by

such trends as urban decay, civil unrest, and unequal access to resources). Less has been written about the influence that automobility has on discursive interaction between social members. In chapter one, I will narrow in on literature that details three particular tendencies of automobility. Those tendencies are: 1) the dispersion and fragmentation of opportunities for discursive interaction; 2) an individualistic conception of social members, which is fostered by heightened isolation; and 3) the privatization of the substantive issues associated with automobility.

The first tendency arises from a contradiction inherent in automobility: the problem of access is exacerbated by the means of achieving such access. Partly because of the infrastructural needs for the individuated travel patterns that are promised by automotive technology, the amount of space that must be traversed continues to increase as automotive use increases. Further, land development patterns, compatable telecommunications technology and public policy work to encourage increases in automotive use by improving the convenience and safety of driving. The resulting intense mobility is illustrated by John Adams' "time-space dome" (1996: 11), which denotes the relationship between a group's 'mobility surface' and their 'interaction field': as travel between activites increases (both in distance and frequency) the amount of time spent at each point decreases. Mapping a highly mobile society would produce a flattened and spread out time-space dome, illustrating shorter amounts of time spent at each point of potential interaction. While interaction can take on many forms, and cannot be assumed to be discursive, if the potential for interaction is generally reduced by automobility, one can deduce that opportunities for discursive interaction would also shrink.

Second, automobility fosters individualistic conceptions of subjectivity. The automobile is one of an amalgam of technologies that, together, promise technical solutions to what Adams refers to as a 'hypermobile' society (2005)[1]. The expectations, as well as desires, to be effectively networked within such a society involves concomitant phenomena of hybridity, for instance the 'car-driver', which is part of an "assemblage... of machines, roads, signs and whole cultures of mobility" (Urry 2002: 3). At the same time, the subjectivity of the car-driver is tied further to that technical object which provides for the experience and expression of pleasure and skill that is associated with driving. Personal identity is expressed through one's automobile; the attributes of one's vehicle is expressive of the car-driver herself. The expectation of personal comfort and safety now extends beyond the person to their automobile; the atmosphere and social mix within it is controllable by the car-driver. The problem that automotive technology is meant to fix seems less to do with access to the means of daily life than with improving the ability of individuals to move freely and independently, comfortably and powerfully. While taking us *to* the places that we must go for work, rest and play, it also takes us *away* from those places that could otherwise be diverse, lively and enriched by continuously unfolding, face-to-face interpersonal relationships. Further, this solution takes us *through* places that, marked by large highways and flattened vistas, become merely spaces to be overcome. One consequence of these 'dominated' spaces is increased congestion, which tends to heighten the stress of those individuals who, while

[1] However, as was mentioned in the previous paragraph, these technologies, along with other social resources, have the paradoxical effect of increasing mobility, generating 'hypermobility'.

sitting next to one another, view each other as further obstacles in the way of free movement.

Third, the substantive content of discursive interaction that deals with issues related to the production and use of automobiles is often framed so as to situate it within the purview of private concern (economic liberties, personal taste and daily caretaking). However, the necessity for coordination between social actors illuminates the social character of mobility practices. Elizabeth Shove suggests that "systems of mobility not only permit people to fulfil necessary practices, they have the further consequence of modifying what those practices are and how they are 'normally' configured and structured" (2002: 2). Automobility, as a specific system of mobility, has had an immense impact on the way in which life patterns are arranged, both individually and socially. Ignoring this factor not only obscures the social character of automobility and the disadvantages that exist for those enmeshed in such a system, but also produces a closure of critical discussion between social members about the implications of that system.

The previous descriptions illuminate some important questions: 1) what is important about discursive interaction?; 2) how do our conceptions of subjectivity influence our interactions with others?; and 3) how does treating issues associated with automobility as those of private concern influence our ability, as a society, to discover the necessary aspects of a morally justified coordination of action (or way of life)? Chapter two and three will provide a theoretical framework to aid in a discussion of these questions.

Located in the tradition of critical theory, Habermas' work connects issues of rationality, moral validity, normative legitimacy, and potential for emancipatory social conditions. He proposes a communicative theory of rationality, which includes, as one aspect, universal presuppositions of argumentation that pertain to moral-practical discourses. His theory of communicative action is, in part, a response to the nihilism that concludes from relativist arguments: if the necessary result of a theoretical proposition is a balancing of different value orientations, then impositions of power by some upon others cannot be critically addressed. Morality is stuck in a theoretical cul-de-sac with no hope of resolution. Habermas wants to rediscover a path of critical self-reflection that can direct us toward emancipation. Chapter two will outline the key components of Habermas' discourse ethics that explain the connection between reason, validity and legitmacy. His historical examination of the transformation of the public sphere leads to a discovery, of theoretical importance, of the rational kernel in the bourgeois public sphere. This is contrasted to the pre-conventional and conventional stages of social integration, where normative validity is grounded in kinship arrangements and religious worldviews. With the bourgeois public sphere, the presentation of the best argument begins to ground validity. While recognizing the limitations of bourgeois culture, Habermas uses the discovery of this shift in the bases of validity to develop his discourse ethics.

Validity claims, which occur in everyday speech, refer in part to the taken-for-granted shared knowledge with which social actors coordinate their actions. It is not necessary to expose all validity claims to processes of argumention, for their refutation or redemption, because of the implicit agreements that must exist for daily life to proceed.

However, instances of controversy do arise. Settling controversy by way of discursive means requires argumentation: reasons are provided by the parties to the discourse with an orientation toward mutual understanding. According to Habermas, discourse, as opposed to everyday speech, is an "exacting type of communication" (1990: 202) in that its normative content is generalizable, and may be abstracted and extended to a larger communication community than is represented in specific life histories and forms. An attitude of impartiality must be taken by discourse participants if claims about what is right or permissable to all who are potential members of the communication community are to hold.

Habermas proposes a distinction between two modes of rationalization (which are explained in terms of action models): instrumental and communicative. While instrumental rationality is necessary for systemic integration, it depends upon the resources produced through communicative rationality, namely meaning, ego strength and social solidarity. When instrumental rationality overtakes communicative rationality, as can be seen currently, certain crises begin to take shape. This has implications for how we view past and current social conditions as being conducive to either freedom or oppression, as well as pointing to sites of crisis and potential change.

Chapter three will examine Benhabib's contribution to discourse ethics. She highlights an apparent contradiction in Habermas' formulation: while the capacities for moral judgement involve an enlarged, impartial attitude, those capacities cannot be disentangled from the specific life forms that either enable or hinder their development and engagement. This involves two conceptions of the other, both general and concrete, as well as regard for those notions of the good life that must be critically evaluated for

their capacity-enhancing character. In order to address this contradiction, she reformulates the definition of the 'moral point of view' and capacities for moral judgement to include an explicit recognition of the inherent connection between ways of life and an ability to engage in moral judgement and discourse.

The historical account that Habermas provides of the public sphere sets up an opposition between public and private, and the corresponding roles that those spheres play in the moral development of social members. Benhabib maintains that the oppositions that are included in Habermas' discourse ethics, such as public norms versus private values, justice versus the good life, and generalizable interests versus private need interpretations, are conditioned more by a blindspot in his historical analysis, namely the predominately male-oriented understanding of the public sphere, rather than by a necessity to include them in a rigorous moral theory. Her project, while fundamentally in agreement with Habermas as to the principles that ought to constrain discourses, is an attempt to shift the focus: "[t]he emphasis now is less on *rational agreement*, but more on sustaining those normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement *as a way of life* can flourish and continue" (1992: 38).

The second role that chapters two and three will play is to illuminate those conditions that, while viewed as necessary for strengthening a discourse ethic, are suppressed by the tendencies, previous described, of automobility. Though Habermas and Benhabib do not discuss automobility themselves, I will examine, in chapter four, how certain tendencies of automobility disrupt the development and maintenance of our capacities for moral judgement and discussion. Automobility can be viewed as a socio-technical complex which exacerbates social crises. While conceptualizing alternatives

may be one way out of the oppressive circumstances of which automobility is constitutive, it is important to take another step first. This thesis will proceed with an examination of those aspects of automobility that disrupt the intersubjective and critical character of processes of moral justification.

1 AUTOMBILITY

Automobility is a term that refers to those aspects of life that arise and are intensified by a dependency on the automobile for transportation. Sheller and Urry refer to automobility as "a machinic complex of manufactured objects, individual consumption, environmental resource use and dominant culture that generates a specific character of domination over almost all contemporary societies" (2003: 115). As well, much research has been done on various issues associated with automobility, such as suburban growth (see Kunstler 1994, 1998; Whyte 1968), the associated decline of public transit systems (see Jacobs 2004), impacts upon the environment (see Kay 1998), resource use and fuel consumption (see http://culturechange.org/cms/index.php), and potential alternatives to automobility (see Crawford 2000; Newman and Kenworthy 1999). These descriptions and studies are helpful for illuminating the effects that automobility has upon our lives, as well as for providing resources for further study.

This thesis is not merely a description of automobility, and thus it will not cover all the related aspects and details. Instead it will outline, in this chapter, three tendencies of automobility with an aim to shedding light on the influence that those tendencies have upon discursive interaction between social members.[2] In short, for the moment, those tendencies are: 1) the dispersion and fragmentation of opportunities for discursive interaction because of the increased frequency and distance of trips that automotive

[2] Arguing about the data in the literature that I am using to describe these tendencies of automobility would be a different project altogether than this thesis is intended to be. As such, rather than examining the accuracy of the data included in the automobility literature, I am taking that literature 'at its word' and using it to make a critical examination of social conditions that are associated with automobility.

technology engenders; 2) an individualistic conception of social members, as well as an ignorance of the social and relational foundations of autonomy, both of which are fostered by heightened isolation; and 3) the privatization of the substantive issues associated with automobility, so that issues of economic liberty, personal taste and daily caretaking are viewed as pertaining to, and under the auspices of, individual opinion. The second and third trends occlude a recognition of the dependency of individual pursuits on public ideologies, plans and expenditures.

1.1 Dispersing and fragmenting discursive interaction

"Mass mobility does not generate mass accessibility." (Urry 1999a: 7)

Elizabeth Shove calls automobiles 'convenience devices' (in Urry 1999a: 6) because they allow individuals to escape the public time-tabling that is required when using mass transportation, such as buses and trains. This ability to transcend the necessity of directly coordinating one's mobility schedule with those of others reflects an intense flexibility, which is understandably experienced as freedom. For a person who owns an automobile, its constant (24 hours a day, 365 days a years) availability and speed allows them to travel to places of their own choosing at any time of the day or night. While communications technology engenders a virtual mobility (which, as will be discussed, can be positively correlated to increased corporeal mobility), the convenience factor associated with automotive technology is unique and unsurpassed.

While it is difficult to argue with the presence of such convenience, there are many other aspects to take into consideration. First, resources enable a person to take advantage of the freedom that an automobile provides. A driver must have the technical

skill and requisite licencing. Further, the infrastructure necessary for driving, such as roads and parking or storage, must be provided. John Adams tells us that in order to provide one parking space for the 800,000 new vehicles on the road each year in Britain, the equivalent of a nine lane car park stretching from London to Edinburgh would have to be built[3] (2005: 1). Even more dramatic, in speculating about the current trend of other countries, such as China, to develop national automotive industries and change policy that is intended to intensify automotive production and use, Adams predicts that "by 2025 there will be 6.4 billion motor vehicles [worldwide, and]... if stationary they could be accomodated on a motorway around the equator 1,000 lanes wide" (1996: 6)[4]. Such statistics are obviously speculative, and not used here to provide precise empirical evidence. They are meant to illustrate the spatial impact of the infrastructural requirments for automotive use. The freedom discussed in the previous paragraph is contingent on such requirements being met.

Automobility allows such freedom not only by increasing and intensifying our personal mobility but, more to the point, because it gives us access to those things that we want or need for our daily lives and those people to who we want or need to be in close proximity. However, a contradiction arises: "it seems that cars simultaneously create precisely the sorts of problems which they also promise to overcome" (Shove in Urry 1999a: 7). In offering a faster, more convenient mode of mobility in order to get us to home, work, school, shopping and recreational sites, the automobile has also generated fragmented sites. Suburbs and zones of single-use development, such as industrial,

[3] Adams' information relates to numbers gathered from 2001 to present, and accounts for both numbers of cars sold and scrapped.
[4] Also, keep in mind that these statistics reflect only one parking spot per vehicle, where each vehicle requires more than one space in journeying from place to place.

commercial and residential, have increased. At the same time as the automobile provides the means for accessing dispersed and fragmented sites of activity, those sites are developed to provide a greater convenience for driving to them. Shopping malls are a good example of the sort of development that is symbiotic with large scale automobile use; the automobile provides convenient access to shopping malls while malls provide a 'one-stop-shop' and plenty of parking (not to mention that the layout of the access roads is convenient for drivers while often being inconvenient for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users).

What about the ability to be in contact with the people upon who we depend? In some cases, it seems that the telephone, television and internet (as well as all the new technologies that combine all three) have replaced a need to be in the physical presence of others. These technologies have brought the 'world out there' into our private spaces. We no longer need to step outside our homes to encounter other people and other cultures. With telecommunications technology we are able not only to view the world, but, as well, to interact with it, and others in it. Many of us no longer need to leave our homes to work, shop or socialize. This is a different form of mobility, which provides us with the means for engaging in daily activities without utilizing a vehicle. These would seem to be positive developments that may alleviate the detrimental effects of automobility. However, Adams informs us that "[h]istorically the growth trends of both sorts of mobility have correlated strongly and positively, and today the most physically mobile societies are also the heaviest users of all forms of telecommunications" (2005: 10). As well, communications technologies have reduced the cost and inconvenience of physical mobility, enabling drivers to bypass congestion, make arrangements while on

the move, or find specific directions to destinations. This makes physical travel even more convenient, cheaper and less problematic, and thus more attractive. This would account for the annual increases in automotive sales (Adams 2005: 1) despite the continued innovation and development of communications technologies.

Shove and Urry discuss what is referred to by Boden and Molotch as 'the compulsion to proximity' (2002: 2; 1999a: 14). Communication technology may aid in continuing already forged personal relationships, or to forge new ones, but physical proximity to others both establishes and reinforces trust between people and makes it possible for community members to discover and reproduce collective meanings and norms. This implicates the question of what characterizes community, which becomes a more complex question to address with ever more dispersed and fragmented forms of interaction. Community implies some degree of shared meaning, otherwise there would be nothing about which individuals would be 'communing'. Likewise, shared meaning indicates a degree of continuity, since explicit and implicit reference to something meaningful requires memory. Considering the ephemeral and anonymous nature of virtual interaction, common meaning among members of communities that exist purely through such technology is maleable at best and misleading or manipulable at worst. The intensely personal relationships that are fostered by face-to-face interaction cannot be replaced by the forms of interaction that occur through communications technology. The increased physical mobility that has arisen along with heightened virtual mobility seems to indicate that people have this 'compulsion to proximity'.

Now that evidence has been presented that strongly suggests that automobility has intensified, despite developments in communications technology, a description of John

Adams' time-space dome (see Appendix A) will be included to illustrate the "interaction field" (1996: 11) of a population. This graph depicts the mobility surface of any group (assuming that the starting point for each person is the same): "the height... at any particular point is proportionate to the amount of time that is spent at that point" (1996: 11); the volume reflects the amount of time that each person has overall to engage in those activities they deem necessary in life. The volume never changes, regardless of the pattern of the mobility surface, since everyone has only 24 hours a day, 365 days a year available to them. The shape of the dome, however, does change (Adams 1996: 11-13).

The gravity model of travel behavour is instructive here: it proposes that as any two points become further apart from one another, the force of attraction lessens, and so does the frequency of travel between them. If most travel remains close to the centre, while less frequent but longer trips occur, then the centre of the graph will have height while the edges will be spread out. As travel distance for each journey increases, the mobility pattern of the population is thinner and more spread out. Mapping a highly mobile society would produce a flattened and spread out time-space dome, illustrating shorter amounts of time spent at each point of potential interaction. If electronic mobility were also depicted by such a graph, the spread of the dome would be even more dramatic; while being physically present at 'the centre', interaction is occurring between highly dispersed nodes (whether with individuals, groups or virtual entities) (Adams 1996: 13).

Adams points out that a single graph illustrating a shift in general mobility patterns does not show the distribution among population members. He points out that as some become more mobile, others become less mobile, and so a representational graph

would include several interaction fields; "those of the highly mobile spread and overlap, while those of the decreasingly mobile contract" (1996: 13). Thus, in terms of accessability and participation, there is a discrepancy between the "mobile rich" (Adams 1996: 13), who engage in ever more conspicuous consumption of mobility services, and the "immobile poor" (Ibid.), who are constantly provided with glamorous images of extreme mobility while they become less able to avail themselves of such a life.

Meanwhile, the physical arrangement of the sites of activity and interaction shift to accord with increasing mobility, depleting the sites of immobility of the means for fulfilling daily life activities. Such circumstances can be seen in places such as Detroit, where the innercity faces further deterioration and financial crisis. At the same time, the municipal government considers cost-saving measures such as limiting the already underfunded bus service, which would make it impossible for many of those who depend on those services to get home from work (Anderson 2005). As Shove suggests, "in collective terms, greater mobility is likely to increase social-spatial exclusion and decrease opportunities for effective participation" (2002: 2).

1.2 Fostering individualistic conceptions of subjectivity

"On the one hand, 'auto' refers reflexively to the humanist self, such as the meaning of 'auto' in autobiography or autoerotic. On the other hand, 'auto' refers to objects or machines that possess a capacity for movement, as expressed by automatic, automaton and especially automobile." (Urry 2002: 2-3)

Though sharing some aspects with, for example, train travel, driving in an automobile is a unique experience. Viewing the world through a window-screen as it passes rapidly by is an experience prefigured by train travel. As well, the internal atmosphere, including the temperature, lighting, and soundscape, is separated from the

external environment. The internal domain is, to a certain extent, controllable while external nature is not.[5] With automotive travel, these elements become even more disparate. Several features of the automobile, such as windows, heating and cooling systems, adjustable seats and mirrors to name a few, enable the driver to control the internal atmosphere. Further, where the train propelled several people within the same car, the automobile is an individualized private capsule of mobility. Not only are drivers separated from the outside environment, they must no longer deal with the smells and sounds of other strange passengers; drivers are alone (except for their chosen passengers) in their mobility.

The sensuous experiences produced by the various technologies inside the automobile, such as heat controls, adjustable components, and entertainment devices, are geared to accord with the desires of the driver. At the same time, drivers control "the social mix in their car just like homeowners control those visiting their home" (Urry 1999a: 9). Just as in one's home, the automobile is the site where many kinds of social interactions are performed, from business to friendly to criminal. This control can be seen to extend to the entire vehicle, inside and out. It is generally seen as the perogative of the car-driver as to whether or not a person outside of the vehicle, such as a 'squiggy kid', mechanic, or admirer, is permitted to touch it, and what form that touch takes.

Such control is accompanied by skill sets. On a basic level, one must have the skills to drive. This means understanding the workings of, and being able to maneuver, such a large mechanical object as the automobile. In becoming a skillful driver, the vehicle becomes an extension of the body. A driver must be able to sense the edges of

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[5] Though socio-cultural practices influence the outside environment, and, by extension, how we then perceive it.

the vehicle, and many of the motions involved in driving become second nature. The experience of driving on the opposite side of the road than one is used to highlights the extent to which the act of driving is, in many ways, automatic.[6] The skill to maneuver an automobile is intensified in cases where it is used as a weapon, as with 'road rage.' Michael argues that "one actually needs to be more skillful, to push both body and machine into quantitatively greater alignment, then in the case where one is a responsible civilized driver... In order to exercise 'loss of social control', one needs to practice greater technological control" (in Urry 1999a: 10). Thus, these two levels of skill exemplify the dual character of the car-driver: careful and responsible (which is encouraged in advertisements for Volvo and minivans, for instance) versus competitive and dangerous (seen as appealing in advertisements for sports vehicles, both small and sports utility or SUVs).

Hybridity, a term used by several authors (see Dant 2004: 62; Featherstone 2004: 2), denotes the integration of body and machine, but involves more than a mechanical extension of the human body. "[T]he car-driver is a 'hybrid' assemblage, not simply of autonomous humans but simultaneously of machines, roads, buildings, signs and entire cultures of mobility" (Urry 2002: 3). The interface of the car-driver has a non-local orientation, primarily because of the speed with which automobiles move through the landscape. While car-drivers are capacitated and encouraged, through various means, to maintain and increase their mobility, their responsibility to traversed spaces, as well the

[6] This is not an unusual phenomenon with technological use. The degree to which a particular technological artifact is appropriated by the human body, and the motions entailed in its use become taken for granted, is the degree to which its usefulness is realized. However, this does not preclude other, often externalized and unforeseen, consequences of technological use.

people and cultures that inhabit those places, remains unrecognized, both by the individual driver and by society at large. The car-driver interface is also non-personal. Interaction occurs through the mechanical element of this hybrid so that eye-contact and verbal communication are not necessary nor possible (in most cases). The shared norms that enable automobility are formulated as visual and aural signals, communicated to each driver in turn (Urry 2002: 4). Interaction between individuals is strictly mediated through objects rather than occurring between subjects. This is so even when drivers sit next to one another, in traffic congestion for instance. Car-drivers, frustrated in their purpose of being mobile, view each other as obstacles in the way of free movement.

Notably, among many of the factors that encourage driving is the externalization of risk. While the responsibilization of drivers has intensified with the proliferation of insurance companies (cf. Ericson and Dyle 2004), the risk of physical harm or fatality is weighted heavily on the side of pedestrians and cyclists. The risk associated with exposure to environmental dangers, such as fuel emissions, is also felt more by those who must reside in spaces that are impacted by such dangers. Drivers may insulate themselves from much of the environmental fallout of automotive use by sealing themselves in their vehicles as they escape to less environmentally fraught places.

One effect of the increasing lack of safety on streets is a retreat of pedestrians and cyclists. The liveliness of face-to-face interaction is being lost to car-only environments.[7] Even in cases where some pedestrians and cyclist remain, their "taskscapes" (Urry 2002:5) are interrupted by automobiles, the movement of which is given priority in many of the spaces that they dominate. One segment of the population that has moved off the

[7] Urry tells us that "nearly one-half of [the land] in LA is devoted to car-only environments" (2002: 5).

streets is children. The fact that far less children die from on-street accidents does not indicate that streets are now safer than they used to be, but that they are so dangerous that children are kept from using them for play and interaction with others (Adams, 2005: 6). This loss of freedom for children, according to Adams, "denies them the experience of mixing independently with their peers and learning to cope without adult supervision, experience essential to the process of socialization" (Ibid.).

These early experiences illustrate the general withdrawal of the public use of streets. Public roads[8] have become strictly the thoroughfares for the quasi-private spaces of automobiles. The spatial dimensions of interaction within automobility is accompanied by specific temporal dimensions, the characteristics of which are generally termed 'instantaneous' by Urry (1999a: 7-8). Appendix B provides more detail of this particular temporality, but, in short, it is fluid, indistinct, volatile, and temporary. For instance, instantaneous time involves the breaking down of the public timetable that is used for public transportation. These public forms of time-tabling are "replaced by personalized, subjective temporalities, as people live their lives in and through their car(s) (if they have one). This helps to produce a reflexive monitoring of the self. People try to sustain 'coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives'" (Giddens in Urry 2002: 4). On the face of it, these characteristics are not necessarily problematic. However, there are fewer opportunities to discover and exchange the social, political and cultural material from which individuals may draw for continuity, in the service of memory, self-reflection and autonomy.

[8] 'Public' is used here to denote the fact that roads are public, that is, they are publically funded.

What is it, then, that individuals draw upon for grounding personal identity under a system of automobility? The automobile itself has become an apotheosis of personal identity. Rather than developing the capacity for critical self-reflection through processes of socialization, the self is expressed in the automotive object itself, as well as by enacting notions of freedom, power and speed through one's automobile. The ascription of status to the owner or driver of an automobile is associated with certain sign-values that are generated in advertising, literary and cinematic images, as well as through general norms of sociality. Status relates to the degree to which a particular vehicle, by way of its age, style, make, model, colour, size, etc., expresses the values of "speed, home, safety, sexual desire, career success, freedom, family, [and] masculinity" (Urry 1999a: 2). Though many people have less actual choice as to what car to buy (mostly because of financial constraints), the decision to buy an automobile is accompanied by considerations of how the vehicle represents its owner to others; to what extent does the vehicle promote comfort and feelings of ease, so that the car represents the owner/driver as they want to be seen? Much care is taken in choosing which vehicle is the 'right one' for any potential owner, and the specifics of that choice, as it represents an individual's character and life, is a right of the buyer.

1.3 The privatization of substantive issues

"To question the benefits of hypermobility[9] is not to deny freedom and choice. It is to ask people what it is that they really, *really* want, and to confront them with the fact that their choices have consequences beyond the primary objects of their desires." (Adams 2005: 16)

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[9] Particularly as it involves automobility, which is recognized by Adams as being a key aspect of hypermobility.

This thesis is not meant to be an examination of the economic foundations of automobility (that project is planned for my dissertation research). However, it needs to be pointed out here that one component of automobility is intense individual consumption. After housing, the automobile is the next most consumed item. Currently, there are 700 million autmobiles owned worldwide (Urry 2004: 25). Relatedly, automotive production is a leading component of the industrial sector, "from which key concepts such as Fordism and Post-Fordism have emerged to analyse the nature of, and changes in, the trajectory of western capitalism" (Urry 1999a: 2). A disproportionate number of other industries are also involved in supporting automobility: "car parts and accessories; petrol refining and distribution; road-building and maintenance; hotels, roadside service areas and motels; car sales and repair workshops; suburban house building; new retailing and leisure complexes; advertising and marketing, and so on" (Ibid.). From individual practices to industrial development, the automobile is a key object in capitalist activity, which stresses the prerogative of individuals and private enterprise to make decisions based on personal desire and profit-making success.

Practical concerns are also considered when buying a vehicle. Especially in places where travel by automobile has become the predominate mode of transportation (to the detriment, in many cases, of other modes such as walking, cycling and mass transit), the decision to buy a vehicle is a necessity for being able to participate in daily activities. Caring for the daily needs of oneself, as well as one's dependents, requires the use of a vehicle. Because of a combination of physical (as in infrastructural and environmental), normative (what is viewed as 'normal' social practice) and political-economic (reflected in the ideologies, strategies and programmes of state and market

actors) imperatives, satisfying the daily necessities and desires of life is overwhelmingly dependent upon use of the automobile. However, rather than such circumstances being recognized as a subordination of choice, such a dependency is viewed as freedom, to exercise the right of self-governance and self-care.

Utilizing such means for accessing the resources, both material and relational, that are required for daily life is seen as a personal choice and individual right. However, such choices and rights depend upon the commonwealth of roads and other infrastructure, natural resources, and the built environment. Other modes of transportation are subordinated (see Jacobs 2004; Kunstler 1994), which effectively limits the actual choices and rights of those without vehicles (because of financial, physical or ethical reasons) to access the means for daily caretaking.

The description provided thus far illustrates the fact that mobility practices are socially grounded. Shove proposes that "consumption, including consumption of mobility services, is undertaken in the course of achieving what people count as normal social practice, signalling membership of society, conforming to convention and reproducing social order" (2002: 2). The general lack of recognition of this fact is constitutive of automobility; the atomized, individualized and privatized orientation of both subjects and themes propels the distinct character of its associated practices. However, the problem of coordination does not dissipate by engaging such practices. Quite the opposite: the problem of coordinating the movement of objects and people through space and time in such a way that the needs of individuals and societies are met is actually exacerbated by automobility. Shove outlines the problem as this: "by speeding things up, or offering increased flexibility, contemporary technologies, systems and

infrastructures of mobility permit the fragmentation of episodes into smaller and smaller 'units' thereby increasing the challenge of co-ordinating what become separate events" (2002: 5).

Rather than attempting cooperative methods for addressing such challenges, individuals cope with these fragmented circumstances by "adopt[ing] responsive strategies that enhance their ability to follow space-time trajectories of their own choosing" (Ibid.). Obviously, the coordination problem just described increases still further if everyone is responding in similarly individuated patterns. Shove discusses the varying degrees to which people are able to access the resources necessary to fulfill daily activities, which, in turn, is influenced by infrastructure. This "three way interaction between social obligation, individual or collective resources, and physical infrastructure... [results in] social-spatial inclusion/exclusion" (Shove 2002: 3). While it is important to recognize that there exists various forms of social obligation, and varying patterns of mobility that support them, there is a relationship between individual practice and collective trends. By proposing the model above, Shove hopes to illuminate "the constitutive role of practice in the making of social structure" (2002: 4). Likewise, social structure involves what is considered to be normal practice, both in terms of social obligation and individual activities.

Where coordination is a problem, "convenience is a valued and relevant quality" (Warde in Shove 2002: 5). However, it is not enough to have a technology, such as the automobile, that provides such convenience for its users. The practices of social members must still be coordinated, and some people "generally have 'greater capacity to exert autonomous control over their own trajectories through time and space, and to

subordinate the schedules of others to their own'" (Warde in Shove 2002: 5). Such inequalities do not indicate different degrees of leisure time. Rather, it shows that while some are able to respond flexibly to changes in plans or obligations, others' temporal and spatial schedules are arranged to provide such flexibility (and convenience) for the former.

What we, as a society, seem to be continually attempting to 'fix' is the problem of coordinating consumption practices. The inequalities between those with a capacity for flexibility and those without, is not, then, problematic. The overall industrial wealth that is tied to automotive production is evidence enough that automobility satisfies expectations of profit maximization. How, then, do we deal with the negative fallout of automobility? Overwhelmingly, public resources are being spent on technical fixes to the issues of environmental damage and congestion. However, when the standards for problem-solving are based on an assumed desire and need for mobility, and specifically the private and flexible mobility that automobiles provide, these problems will only be exacerbated. Criteria for planning are framed by the imperatives of the automobile, for example those of speed, flexibility, freedom and consumer choice (Urry 1999a: 8). Other, potentially opposing, criteria are either ignored, deemed irrelevant or untenable, or subordinated to those set by automobility.

We need to start asking different questions, questions that enable us to envision different social practices and ways of life. However, with increasing physical separation between us, and ignoring the social networks upon which we depend, a capacity for critical attention to our circumstances is dampened. The very standards of development are propelling us down a path from which it will become increasing difficult to move.

Ironically, heightened mobility is becoming entrenched. In the next chapter, I will outline Habermas' discourse ethics as both moral and political theory. Such a framework will provide the conceptual tool for comprehending the orientation towards mutual understanding that is embedded in natural language. It is also important to consider the ways in which social order is grounded in a cooperative search for truth, and the consequences of instrumentalizing the communicative processes from where that search stems.

2 HABERMAS' DISCOURSE THEORY OF JUSTICE

Habermas wants to show that "moral justifications are dependent on argumentation actually being carried out, not for pragmatic reasons of an equalization of power, but for internal reasons, namely that real argument makes moral insight possible" (1990: 57). This claim illuminates the potential for justifying social action, and, in particular, its institutional bases. As his work spans decades and includes discussion of many interlocking ideas, historical analyses, and philosophical traditions, it would be impossible to include a detailed and encompassing description here. I have chosen to include Habermas' discourse ethics because, through it, he provides a theoretical framework that is interesting and relevant for the issues that I wish to investigate. Those issues include: an understanding of the human capacity for moral judgement; the practical contexts from which such a capacity arises, and to which it contributes; and the emancipatory potential of practical-moral judgement.

I will thus outline those aspects of Habermas' work that are particularly helpful for the purposes of this thesis. I will begin with reference to his theory of justice, which differentiates between moral questions of 'ought' and other practical questions, namely pragmatic and ethical ones. All these types of questions involve communicative action embedded in lifeworld contexts. However, moral discourses are distinct in that they engage argumentation, which is an abstract, generalizable form of communication. Engaging in argumentation requires a moral point of view that is oriented to a larger communication community than is represented in specific forms of life.

Such argumentation can be associated with the development of a political public sphere. In efforts to critique the previously taken-for-granted status and power that was ascribed to persons according to family lineage, as well as formulate fair rules for the exchange of private property, discussion developed among certain individuals coming together to form a public. Through means such as written publications and in places such as public coffee houses, individuals came together freely to discuss market rules that could be applied fairly to all (Habermas 1989: 21-30). However, the bourgeois public sphere was also exclusive to educated, propertied males. As the legitimacy of such exclusivity weakened, the interests of previously excluded others began to be included in public discussion. This transformation increased the potential for rational discourse because it actualized the critical requirement of openness (i.e. the justification of an action lies, at least partially, in the potential for all those affected by its consequences to be party to its realization). At the same time, both the specific character of the public sphere (as opposed to the private sphere) and the appropriateness of matters for public debate continue to be controversial. This chapter will look at Habermas' concept of the political public sphere, from the discursive kernal that he identifies in bourgeois society to the transformations that occurred thereafter with the liberal and welfare-state models of civil society.

As the rationalization of the public sphere increases, the differentiation and complexity of society also increases. Further inclusivity, functionally differentiated spheres of life, and shifts in the bases of legitimacy adds to the complexity of society, and organizational demands are satisfied, on a greater scale, by an instrumental coordination of social action. The steering media of power and money can be understood through a

system-theoretical paradigm. Habermas' explication of instrumental action, operative within systemic integration, will be discussed.

Finally, the reliance of system integration on the social production of meaning will be elaborated. The tendency of delinguistified media to operate 'over the heads' of actors can lead to social inequality, exploitation, and repression. This thesis is a theorization of the ways in which automobility contributes to the generation of such conditions by fostering objectifying and instrumentalizing interaction between social actors, and strengthening a systemic integration of social action. As such, this chapter provides the theoretical frame with which to understand the links between reason and emanicipation, and the potential socio-political consequences of disrupted communicative action.

It should be noted here that this chapter is a precursor to a Benhabibian reconstruction of some of Habermas' work, including the foci he takes in his historical analysis of the political public sphere. While remaining Habermasian in the important senses of being critical, pragmatic and universal, her reconstruction involves themes and discourse participants which Habermas' theory effectively brackets off. While Habermas focusses on the institutional bases of society, and the transcendance of particular life forms in moral-practical discourses, Benhabib draws our attention to the slippages between institutional structures and everyday experiences. This discussion, including her own theoretical position with regards to discursive practices, will be expanded in chapter three.

2.1 Justice

Habermas claims that the practical question, 'what should I do?' can be addressed from three different perspectives. As a question of pragmatics, it points to the personal perspective of the actor in figuring out the best means for arriving at their preferred ends;

> [t]his is essentially a matter of settling empirical questions and questions of rational choice, and the *terminus ad quem* of a corresponding pragmatic discourse is a recommendation concerning a suitable technology or a realizable program of action. (Habermas 1993: 8)

As an ethical question, it relates to a preferred way of life. The decisions involved in this kind of questioning are more general in that they relate to the potential effects that such decisions might have upon the "whole course of one's life" (Ibid.). Notions of what constitutes a good life are involved in this type of questioning. In the realm of morality this question takes on a normative character. Moral questions of ought are not constrained by pragmatic considerations nor by personal identities and life histories. Instead, they relate to the "reciprocal rights and duties" that regulate collective action. Moral discourses, by formulating normative constraints upon action, aid in the "just resolution" of conflicts of interest and the corresponding "disruption of our orderly coexistence" (Habermas 1993, 9). In this sense, actors involved in moral questioning are necessarily autonomous because normative justification is guided by moral insight, distanced from the particularities of pragmatic and ethical considerations.

Such a division seems to imply an unproblematic separation between individual subjects, who act according to their own preformed wills. Habermas does not take such a perspective. He emphasizes the fact that all three types of questions, pragmatic, ethical and moral, are linked by way of their embeddedness in our communal existence. Moral judgement cannot be understood by way of a monological conception of the subject.

Rather, a discourse theory of justice gives an account of the constitution of the subject through public argumentation; framing both pragmatic and ethical questions is contingent on our communal existence, and the autonomy that one may have in those realms of life is likewise contingent on discursive will-formation through moral argumentation. The above distinction should be understood, instead, as the different kinds of problems that people address, and the ways in which "other subjects are encountered" (Habermas 1993: 15) in the resolution of those problems. Only moral-practical questions can be addressed as to the potentially 'right' or 'just' course of action for all.

While social action is legitimately coordinated via communicative processes, moral questioning occurs through a particular kind of communication, namely discourse. The following discussion will outline the basic elements of communicative action generally, and discourse specifically.

2.1.1 Communicative action and the lifeworld

All social participants are simultaneously actors, who have the potential capacity to purposefully influence situations, and products of the webs of traditions, interpersonal relationships, and processes of socialization within which they develop as individuals. The background knowledge that is required for action is constituted by those traditions, relations and processes. While most of it "remains 'behind [the] backs'" (Habermas 1987: 125) of actors, relevant segments of this knowledge come to the fore with each action. The lifeworld provides, and "is represented by," that stock of resources that enable individuals to interpret and act in the world around them (Habermas 1987: 124).

Communicative action is that mode of action through which cultural knowledge is transmitted between social members (and renewed in order to provide the foundations for temporal continuity), solidarity is established and actions coordinated, and personal identities formed (Habermas 1987: 137); it is that mode of action through which the lifeworld is reproduced. Communicative action cannot be understood as occurring over the heads of participants, nor as engaged in by pre-formed, self-producing and self-maintaining individuals. Participation depends on both "the consciousness of the individual in her capacity as an agent" (Cooke 1995: 5) and "the cooperation (more precise, the recognition) of others" (Cooke 1995: 12). It is only through the exchange of communicative acts that agents participate in the production and reproduction of meaning, social solidarity and the strengthening of their own egos.

Plans of action are articulated within "*lifeworld contexts*" (Habermas 1987: 122) that have relevance for specific speech situations. Articulated themes make sense to conversation participants because of the common definitions that they ascribe to such speech situations. Definitions are comprised of claims about facts, norms and personal experiences, though not always explicitly. While often thematizing only one type of claim, an utterance implicates all three. For instance, while a speaker may accurately portray an objective state of affairs, the sincerity of their own commitment to mutual understanding with other conversation participants could still be questioned, and this could impede the resolution of controversial claims. Potential disagreements about unspoken claims, such as whether the speaker is being truthful about their beliefs or experiences, remain implicit until the conversation shifts to bring it into view.

> [T]he lifeworld to which participants in communication belong is always present, but only in such a way that it forms the background for an actual

> scene. As soon as a *context of relevance* of this sort is brought into a situation, becomes part of a situation, it loses its triviality and unquestioned solidity. (Habermas 1987: 123-4)

With each thematic shift the situation definition shared by the participants also shifts, so that the horizon of potentially relevant claims, sitting as the background for each utterance, changes. If there is not sufficient overlap of definitions, participants must go through a communicative process of redefinition.

The actual needs of participants for realizing their goals and plans of action both spring from and are formulated through the illocutionary force of communicative acts that express the intersubjectively understood lifeworld contexts of relevance (Habermas 1987: 121-4). Illocutionary force refers to the action taken in an utterance, and it is the particular form of action taken that comprises the claim to validity. For example, "a speaker can state that *p*; he can deplore or conceal that *p*; he can blame someone for the fact that *p*, and so on" (Habermas 1987: 124). In all cases, the facts, norms or personal experiences that are, explicitly or implicitly, brought forth in an utterance can be criticized and defended as to their validity.

There are three types of validity claims, which correspond to the three functions of the lifeworld outlined previously. These are categorized as claims to truth, rightness, and truthfulness. The first refers to something about the objective world (or states of affairs), the second to something about the social world (or "legitimately regulated interpersonal relationships" or norms), and the third to something about the subjective world, to which the speaker has privileged access (Cooke 1994: 3). Establishing the validity of the claims expressed in communicative acts can be done only by presenting reasons, or, in the case of claims of truthfulness, by consistant behaviour. Validity is found not in the substance of the claim itself, but in the implicit guarantee by the speaker

that she "will, if necessary, make efforts to redeem the claim that the hearer has accepted" (Habermas 1990: 58).

One's ability to say 'no' in the face of claims to validity is dependent upon the mutual recognition between self and other. The processes of socialization through which individuals come to understand the world around them, as well as develop the capacity for rational thinking, inherently involves a recognition of the roles that others play in relation to oneself.[10] In making a claim, I, in the same moment, predict what the response could be. To make a claim at all I am drawing upon commonly shared understandings, which the response will also do. Claims and counterclaims (or responses) that reside outside of common situation definitions are non-sensical. Those that are surprising may lead to misunderstanding, which, unless fixed, cannot provide the means for satisfying plans of action. Communicative acts require that the speaker simultaneously engage in self-criticism, or self-reflection, while also reflecting on the hearer's perspective; these two aspects of communicative acts are mutually dependent. Common situation definitions, as the background material upon which social action is coordinated, arise from cooperative acts that are oriented toward mutual understanding.

> So long as in their speech acts [participants] raise claims to the validity of what is being uttered, they are proceeding in the expectation that they can achieve a rationally motivated agreement and can coordinate their plans and actions on this basis – without having to influence the empirical motives of the others through force or the prospect of reward, as is the case with simple impositions and the threat of consequence. With the differentiation of the basic modes, the linguistic medium of reaching understanding gains the power to bind the will of responsible actors. Ego can exercise this illocutionary power on alter when both are in a position to orient their actions to validity claims. (Habermas 1987: 27)

[10] This concept of roles is taken from G.H. Mead (1934), who presents a social psychological theory to explain the intersubjective character of psychological development. Habermas uses Mead's work throughout his own.

The background knowledge of the lifeworld, providing common situation definitions, is communicatively rendered through everyday speech situations. When speech situations are confronted by conflicting definitions, validity can be reestablished only by recourse to a different form of communication.

2.1.2 Moral-practical discourse and the moral point of view

Discourse is that form of communication that aims at fixing disagreements about the situation definitions relevant for communicative action. Discourse is an "exacting type of communication" (Habermas 1990: 202) in that its normative content is generalizable, and may be abstracted and extended to a larger communication community than is represented in specific life histories and forms (Ibid.). In order for communication to occur at all, there must be implicit agreements among the conversation participants already at play, "since it is impossible to problematize all factual and normative claims simultaneously" (Cronin 1993: xiv). Discourses – specifically, moral-practical discourses – occur when a controversy arises about a previously accepted fact or norm. In order to argue about the validity of a fact or norm, it is necessary to move to a level of communication that is "freed from the imperatives of action" (Cronin 1993: xv).

The legitimacy of discourses depend on their universality, where all those who are potentially affected by the matters under discussion have the opportunity to take part in their resolution. In order for the two principles of *universal moral respect* and *egalitairian reciprocity* to be realized, discourse praticipants must "adopt a hypothetical, argumentative stance toward the validity claims of norms and modes of action that become problematic" (Habermas 1993: 12). Universal moral respect requires "that we

recognize the right of all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in the moral conversation" (Benhabib 1992: 29). Egalitarian reciprocity "stipulate[s] that within such conversations each has the same symmetrical rights to various speech acts, to initiate new topics, to ask for reflection about the presuppostions of the conversation, etc." (Benhabib 1992: 29). These principles, while themselves always open to debate as to their meaning, scope and application, must also always exist in some form for the legitmacy of discourse outcomes to stand.

The moral point of view is that perspective of impartial judgment required for an assessment of validity in moral-practical discourses. Impartiality, in this context, refers not to a perspective that can be held by an isolated individual, rendering judgment from a neutral standpoint. Rather, it refers to the expanded mentality of participants involved in an argumentation game. This expanded mentality considers the interests of all those who are potentially effected by the outcomes of discourse, and the basis of its possibility is reflected in the universal presuppositions of argumentation. The moral point of view from which we, as participants in everyday practical discourses, produce judgment is oriented towards reaching mutual understanding with others.

Any norm may be considered valid if the Principle of Universalization ('U') can be fulfilled, which is formulated as, "*[a]ll* affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its *general* observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of *everyone's* interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation)" (Habermas 1990: 65). This principle sounds similar to Kant's 'categorical imperative' (in Habermas 1993: 8), however, there are important differences between these two frameworks. First, while the 'categorical imperative'

reflects an assumption that the capacity for rational judgment exists prior, and externally, to any shared structures of communication, "discourse ethics prefers to view shared understanding about the generalizability of interests as the *result* of an intersubjectively mounted *public discourse*" (Habermas 1990: 203). Determining the fulfillment of 'U' requires testing within actual discourses. As well, while Kant's justification for moral validity is unsatisfactory because it rests merely on monological testing of maxims, 'U' is derived from inescapable, and thus, universal, presuppositions of argumentation (Habermas 1990: 203-4).

Habermas outlines three levels of presuppositions that can be illustrated using examples of rules, which are taken from Robert Alexy's work. The first set of rules are necessary to produce "intrinsically cogent arguments" (Habermas 1990: 87):

(1.1) No speaker may contradict himself.

(1.2) Every speaker who applies predicate *F* to object *A* must be prepared to apply *F* to all other objects resembling *A* in all relevant aspects.

(1.3) Different speakers may not use the same expression with different meanings.

If any of these rules are violated, the argument will not be intelligible and confusion may result. The conversation will remain controversial, at least until such disruptions are fixed, either because of inconsistency on the part of a speaker or in relation to the content of the conversation itself.

Second are examples of rules that reflect a mutual recognition between participants with intentions of reaching mutual understanding. These are:

(2.1) Every speaker may assert only what he really believes.

(2.2) A person who disputes a proposition or norm not under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so. (Habermas 1990: 88)

If deception or manipulation enters the conversation, then it cannot be construed as a reasonable attempt at reaching mutual understanding, but, instead, could make sense only as a coercive or strategic act. More than mere consistency and cogency, providing truthful representation of the speakers' perspectives and reasonable explanations for expanding the matters under discussion is necessary in order to demonstrate the 'good will' of the conversation participants.

The third level of presuppositions can be reflected in rules that, if met, would lead to "a speech situation immune to repression and inequality" (Habermas 1990: 88). Such speech situations are hypothetical and ideal, which could only be approximated in actual discourses. However, hypothetical imaginings of this kind help to isolate an important element of discursive practices, namely "the cooperative search for truth" (Habermas 1990: 89). The rules that correspond to this third level are:

(3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.

(3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.

b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse

c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.

(3.3) No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2). (Habermas 1990: 89)

If these rules are satisfied, the argumentation process will lead to legitimate norms and institutions. As I am sure the reader has correctly surmised, this last set of rules parallel the principles of *universal moral respect* and *egalitarian reciprocity*.

The above presuppositions are inescapable because, to begin with, to enter into a discussion with the claim that universal moral validity is impossible (a fallibilist

argument) is to engage in a process of argumentation that calls for a consideration of that claim, and either its redemption or its refutation. Even if the fallibilist decides to make her point by disengaging from the argumentation game, or by not entering it at all, she is still a protential participant who, in this particular case, is voluntarily refusing to commit to the discussion.

> Such arguments are geared to convincing an opponent that he makes performative use of something he expressly denies and thus gets caught up in a performative contradiction... This... demonstration serves to make us aware of the extent of the conditions under which we always already operate when we argue; no one has the option of escaping to alternatives. The absence of alternatives means that those conditions are, in fact, inescapable for us. (Habermas 1990: 129-30)

This framework is transcendental in that it discovers the *a priori* conditions of cognition. But it is also pragmatic in that it shows that these conditions regulate everyday conversations that have normative content. Discourse ethics is not merely a hypothetical postulate; it points out that discursive acts are oriented towards understanding and, as such, "always already presuppose those very relationships of reciprocity and mutual recognition around which all moral ideas revolve in everyday life" (Habermas 1990: 130).

Participants in moral-practical discourses do not enter those conversations with all the necessary concepts and capabilities for formulating a validity claim already intact. Argumentation encompasses an element of discovery as well as resolution. This is so because of the intersubjective nature of argumentation. "Controversial questions of normative validity can be thematized only from the first-person plural perspective, that is, in each instance 'by us'; for normative validity claims are contingent on 'our' recognition" (Habermas 1990: 130). Actual instances of argumentation rely on the lifeworld, particularly its production of meaning that illuminates commonly understood

situation definitions from which conversation participants begin in the first place. As well, the ability of conversation participants to transcend particular life circumstances and judge moral concerns impartially is both contingent on the lifeworld and an inherent aspect of argumentation itself. The discursive context of the moral point of view generates enlarged thinking, imbuing the act of judgment with universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity.

As mentioned, processes of argumentation have to actually be carried out in order for validity to be established. Argumentation is construed as public in that it must be open to all those concerned. As such, argumentation requires a public sphere. Habermas' description of the development and transformation of the political public sphere will now be outlined.

2.2 The political public sphere

The theoretical framework thus far explicated is meant, among other things, to address the issue of participation in public discussion. In modern societies, authority is no longer grounded in status but is, instead, derived from reason; there seems to be no good reasons for excluding certain members of society from engaging in what Habermas terms "*forms of discursive will-formation*" (Habermas 1981: 147), though attempts have been made on the grounds of capacity to reason. Because the open and critical discursive processes that generate authority in post-conventional societies have led to complex, diverse, and fluid social differentiation, the issue of legitimacy in collective decision-making becomes all the more difficult to address, and, yet, the more necessary for any

degree of social order to exist. According to Habermas, this post-conventional stage of society has its roots in bourgeois society.[11]

The transformative processes that led to the development of bourgeois society arose out of feudalism. Publicity in feudal times means the display, before the general population, of god's authority embodied in the lordship. With the rise of a capitalist market economy, the notion of publicity denotes, instead, the relations between autonomous individuals who come together to form a public. The issues discussed, such as the rules regulating market exchange, are relevant to public actors generally, and are thus generalizable. Particular interests, because of the bias they import into public discussion, must be addressed in a different manner from generalizable interests. While these interests relate to the production, maintenance and exchange of *private* property, their public relevance, that is the regulative means by which private property involves commodity exchange and social labour, is address in the sphere where private individuals gather to form a public.[12]

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[11] Sheller and Urry include Habermas' conception of the public sphere in their survey of multiple notions (2003: 108-113). They claim that there is a static character to most conceptions of 'public' and 'private'. They offer, instead, a way of conceiving this usually dichotomous idea that recognizes the continuing tendency for 'public' and private' spheres, spaces and lives to overlap and intertwine. Especially with new technological innovations, the boundaries between 'public' and 'private' blurs, and, in some cases, seems to disappear. While recognizing the validity of their descriptions and proposals, I continue to find convincing Habermas' formulation of discursive will formation as being a basis for legitimacy, though it could perhaps be strengthened by other reconceptualizations such as that of Seyla Benhabib.

[12] These individuals were obviously propertied. They were also male and educated (i.e. they were able to produce and read the materials that fostered market exchange; such materials were also the conduits for the discussion, eventually, of other issues and ideas that were not necessarily strictly connected to the market). The inherent problems of these circumstances, for example the marginalization of women from the public sphere, will be discussed further in chapter three.

This new form of publicity thus comes with its own conception of privacy, where the domestic or private sphere, once the invisible domain of production and reproduction, comes to represent the interior and personal element of man, who acts publically in an objective and impersonal market. "As a privatized individual, the bourgeois was two things in one: owner of goods and persons and one human being among others, i.e. *bourgeois* and *homme*" (Calhoun 1992: 11). The private sphere is recognized as the domain of personal freedom and social reproduction, in which individuals develop the capacity to enter the public sphere of moral-practical discourse. The rights to protect one's personal freedoms from public interference are institutionalized through law. Thus, the bourgeois constitutional state is established through the rule of law: legal persons are equal before the law and their autonomy, and privacy, is inalienable, even against state authority itself (Habermas 1987: 359-60).

This sets the stage for liberal and, later, welfare-state democracies. The former extends both the membership of the public sphere and the means of disseminating materials relevant to public discussion. However, this is not merely a matter of quantitatively changing the make-up the public sphere; the quality of public discourse shifts as well. A struggle to maintain the (seemingly) political neutrality of public discourse ensues, while the process for disseminating that discursive content comes to have a greater influence on its character. The opinion that is the product of the literary public (i.e. public opinion) is infused with editorial bias, thus becoming political in nature.

The concern is now about how to protect the autonomy of individuals not only from impositions of state authority, but also from the "the tyrrany of the majority" (Mill

1974: 62). "As the public is enlarged... public opinion itself comes to seem a threat, particularly when it seems to involve a compulsion toward conformity more than critical discourse... This [is] actually a matter, in part, of protecting the possibility of free, critical thought from public opinion itself" (Calhoun 1992: 20). The boundary between private person and public participant, that line behind which freedom is isolated and protected, must be found and maintained. While the private sphere continues to be seen as void of power and domination, the contours of its realm are problematized. Unrestricted public discourse (that is, unrestricted for those persons who have the capacity to engage in rational-critical discussion) remains the key to such a discovery. In order to protect the sanctity of individual freedom, those individuals must be able to contribute to the production of regulatory institutions (discursive, legal, economic and political) that effect their private lives. However, the contradiction mentioned previously remains: the formation of a general will in an expanded public sphere depends on a means of dissemination, which cannot be stripped of editorial bias, thus problematizing the distinction between private interests and public opinion.

As norms become more difficult to produce through critical discussion, the process for justifying public norms becomes more a matter of negotiation between individuals and groups about their private interests. The role of the state is to mediate those negotiations, as well as to regulate and institutionalize compromise between private interests. "This [does] not mean that there [is] not a sharing of culture, only that it [is] a joint consumption rather than a more active participation in mutual critique (and production)" (Calhoun 1992: 23). Here we see the development of the mass welfare-

state. The expansion of membership in the public sphere proceeds to the extent that the character of participation is altered. Habermas agrees with Preuss that

> the public role of the citizen and the private role of the client of the social-welfare state's bureaucracies are interlinked in the political process. 'The mass democracy established as a social-welfare state [has] produced the paradoxical category of the 'socialized private person,' whom we commonly call 'client' and who becomes one with the role of citizen to the extent to which he becomes societally universal'... Democratic universalism flips over into 'generalized particularism'. (1992: 445)

The progressive development of the public sphere to include ever diverse and competing interests has led to circumstances whereby political activity is identified as an ability to insert oneself, and, in particular, one's needs, values and preferred life choices, into the state's priorities for resource distribution. Deliberative forms of political decision-making give way to an exercise of state power and interpersonal compromises.

Habermas is not arguing that the democratization of the public sphere is a mistake, nor that those persons who have previously been excluded ought not to be recognized as equal participants in public discourse. In fact, he thinks that "a critical investigation of the mechanisms that in democracies consituted as social-welfare states function to alienate citizens from the political process" ought to be made (1992: 450). Such an investigation would be cognizant of the degree, or lack, of deliberation occuring in existing democratic political institutions, in the sense that the foundation of deliberative democracy is an institutionalized discourse ethic, inclusive of all those interests that are potentially affected by the outcomes. In order for the political conditions under which society functions to be legitimate, communicative rationality must confront, and have a constraining effect upon the instrumental rationalization of systemic integration. It is the "rational potential intrinsic in everyday communicative practices" (1992: 442) that Habermas is aiming to illuminate with his theory. Such

potential also has "social integrative power" and is "located in those particularized forms of life and lifeworlds that are intertwined with concrete traditions and interest constellations" (Habermas 1992: 444). However, within the political public sphere, such particularities must be transcended in order for deliberative processes to generate legitimate moral norms for social action. Solidarity is necessarily an aspect of communicative action, but necessarily not an aspect of a truly deliberative, open and critical political public sphere; solidarity becomes group interest under social-welfare state democracies.

Habermas wishes to refocus attention to that kernel of rational-critical debate that began with bourgeois society, without proposing a return to the exclusive character upon which that society depended. The transformation of publicity from the authority embodied in absolute sovereignty to "the rule of general, abstract, depersonalized laws" (Calhoun 1992:14) enacts a new form of sociability: authority is constituted through discursive practices, and public persons relate to one another as equally capable of participating in those practices. However, with further differentiation comes increased complexity at the level of the system as a whole. The maintenance of the system, while relying on the generative capacity of lifeworld processes, operates through instrumental means. In other words, the actions of social members are objectified by the system, and coordinated in a goal-oriented fashion. The next section will discuss the role of steering media in directing social action towards systemic self-maintenance, and the social consequences of further encroachment on the lifeworld by system integration.

2.3 Social integration

The differentiation of lifeworld functions has allowed for a critical element distinctive of modern societies. In pre-modern societies, roles and functions are tightly interwoven and structured by kinship ties and mythical worldviews. Members are bound together by their relative place among the kinship network, and are obligated in their respective roles to social reproduction. One's status – that is the position one holds in the legitimately formed lines of descent – is the mechanism that obligates members to each other as well as to the fulfillment of their role in social reproduction; a corresponding worldview provides the standards by which validity is established.

> The norms of the kinship system draw their binding power from their religious foundations. The members of the tribe are thus always a cultic community. In tribal societies the validity of social norms has to be maintained without recourse to a state's power of sanction. Social control requires a cultically anchored, religious grounding: violations of central norms of the kinship system count as sacrilege. The place of the missing external sanctions is taken by a mythical worldview that immobilizes the potential of speech for negation and innovation. (Habermas 1987: 158-9)

Kinship rules structure the arrangement of relations between things in the world and relations among people in social groups in such as way that members of the group understand their social role and function. However, as the exchange of goods between social groups increases, in the service of generating broader social ties (Habermas 1987: 161), material reproduction is intensified, and the goods that are produced diversify. In turn, a division of labour arises and exchange relations shift. Habermas states that "there is a premium on adapting simple action systems to the conditions of *cooperation based on a division of labour*. There are inducements to regulate interaction in such a way that specialized activities can be *authoritatively joined together* and their different results (or products) *exchanged*" (Habermas 1987: 160). Hence, once the needs for material

reproduction begin to change and increase, the functionality of social roles for satisfying such needs becomes more specialized. To the extent that the material products vary, so are the productive roles differentiated out.

At the same time as these specialized and differentiated roles must be joined together, at least at the level of facilitating the exchange of goods, we begin to witness the transformations, discussed above, of the public sphere: as exchange relations and social labour are introduced as the means for satisfying increasing material needs, so does the need for external and generalizable rules for regulating their exchange become apparent. Forms of discursive will-formation arise through the processes for determining the regulatory rules of commodity exchange. As social cohesion depends less on kinship and worldview structures, the lifeworld comes to be grounded more in the exchange of reason and a corresponding enlarged mentality. Differentiation thus occurs on at least two levels simultaneously: on the level of material reproduction, and on the level of social reproduction, where the differentiation of lifeworld structures "releases the rationality potential immanent in communicative action" by detaching it from "concrete and traditional normative behaviour patterns" (Habermas 1987: 180).

In this sense, value orientations are generalized, which "gives rise to two tendencies on the plane of interaction" (Habermas 1987: 180). On the one hand, the establishment of norms is based on the use of language oriented to mutual understanding and agreement. On the other hand, disconnecting normative validity from traditional life forms "forces a separation of action oriented to success from action oriented to mutual understanding" (Ibid.). Retaining a critical and open attitude toward the world, as the means to reproducing meaning, solidarity, and ego-strength, is a demanding expectation

for social agents, especially taking into account the potential for dissent that increases with the delinking of validity and status structures. Though this attitude is necessary, since "social order is not possible among agents who adopt purely instrumental orientations" (Heath 1995: 20), as the burden upon agents becomes greater, a reliance on money and power becomes exagerated because of the ease with which these media can be quantified, assessed, and utilized (Heath 1995: 20). In order to reduce the potential for disagreement and the expenditures of communication, there is further reliance on an instrumental coordination of action via steering media.

Steering media are abstracted forms of prestige and influence, which are two sources of motivation that bind the actions of social members together. Prestige relates to characteristics attributable to an individual, such as physical attractiveness and strength, intellectual capabilities, and skillsets. Such attributes demand a degree of respect in regards to the protection, success or emotional satisfaction that can be delivered by that individual. As well, Habermas identifies the attribute of responsibility. Responsibility is attributable to a "communicatively acting subject," and involves "strength of will, credibility, and reliability" (Habermas 1987: 181). Influence, on the other hand, is based on the resources that are accessible by an individual. These include property and knowledge. The former of these two types of resources, along with physical and intellectual attributes, is an empirical source of motivation; the latter, along with attributes of responsibility, generates rationally motivated agreement.

While in traditional societies prestige and influence are still linked to lifeworld contexts, in modern societies such motivational forces are abstracted and delinguistified. "Media such as money and power attach to empirical ties; they encode a purposive-

rational attitude toward calculable amounts of value and make it possible to exert generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants while bypassing processes of consensus-oriented communication" (Habermas 1987: 183). These media do not have normative content because they do not operate at the level of communicative action, and thus are not based on processes of consensus building. They operate over of the heads of actors, strategically organizing social action, for the purpose of maintaining the system itself. The increasingly complex networks of media-steered actions are constituted in such a way that the actors involved are no longer able to comprehend them.

The maintenance of the system as a whole relies on the social reproduction of meaning, which is necessarily communicatively generated and shared by social members. However, as system integration of social action comes to "mediatize the lifeworld," that is the structures of the lifeworld are effected by system imperatives to the point that the very forms of social integration change, communicative action is systematically distorted.

> This gives rise to a structural violence that, without becoming manifest as such, takes hold of the forms of intersubjectivity of possible understanding. Structural violence is exercised by way of systematic restrictions on communication; distortion is anchored in the formal conditions of communicative action in such a way that the interrelation of the objective, social, and subjective worlds get prejudged for participants in a typical fashion. (Habermas 1987: 187)

When the typical fashion of integration is geared toward the maintenance of the system, which itself functions by way of capitalist imperatives, success in regards to the system is measured by the degree of material reproduction. This often does not accord with supportive conditions for social reproduction. As Habermas states,

> [w]hat presents itself from a system perspective as an integration of society at the level of expanded material reproduction, means, from the perspective of social integration, an increase in social inequality, wholesale economic exploitation, and the judicially cloaked repression of dependent classes. (Habermas 1987: 188)

In this sense, social relations become reified; they get *treated* as objective entities by system functions. Paradoxically, while lifeworld processes of communicative action are distorted, lifeworld resources – meaning, solidarity and ego strength – are depleted.

In the next chapter, Benhabib's correctives to what she views as weaknesses in Habermas' theory will be presented. While she does not wholly disgree with Habermas – in fact she agrees with a great deal of his work – she reconsiders the role that particular others, specific life forms, values and needs interpretations play in a discourse ethical framework. The political implications of such a reconsideration will also be explored in chapter three.

3 BENHABIB'S RESPONSE TO HABERMAS

In the introduction, the question 'how do we judge?' was presented in relation to a concern for the justifiability of particular life forms. In particular, this thesis asks the question of whether and how we can discuss the justifiability of a way of life that is engendered by automobility. Chapter one drew out, from automobility literature, three tendencies that can be seen to have a strong influence on discursive interaction between social members, so that our capacity to investigate, critique and discuss the effects that automobility has upon our lives is dampened. Chapter two explicated Habermas' discourse theory of justice as a framework within which to conceptualize the link between communicative action, rationality, and justice. Morality, within such a framework, is coextensive with justice, and moral-practical discourses are rationally autonomous in that they encompass a broader communication community than is represented in specific life forms. As such, moral-practical discourses must be "freed from the imperatives are action" (Cronin 1993: xv).

In this chapter, Seyla Benhabib's criticisms of Habermas' theoretical framework, as well as her contributions to it, are presented. While being sympathetic to Habermas' discursive and univeralist orientation, she claims that Habermas' discourse ethics relies on certain Enlightenment illusions. Those illusions are metaphysical in that they encompass an understanding of reason that is grounded in the subject. Enlightenment ideals reflect their historical contingency: the subject is idealized in an autonomous male form, which has implication for a definition of the moral point of view, and is insensitive to the variety and fluidity of actual life contexts. In order to address these issues in

Habermas' work, Benhabib proposes a post-metaphysical universalism, which is "historically self-conscious" (1990: 339), sensitive to difference, and reformulates the definition of the moral point of view.

Benhabib claims that in making moral judgments the capacities of the subject cannot be disentangled from the webs of interpersonal relations within which she or he develops as an individual. Further, she explains that moral judgement arises through interaction, which is the culmination of speech and action. Speech and action, together, reveal the concreteness of the doer, but this can only be achieved among others. "Only if somebody else is able to understand the meaning of our words as well as the whatness of our deeds can the identity of the self be said to be revealed. Action and speech, therefore, are essentially interaction. They take place among humans" (Benhabib 1992: 127). This points to a distinction between Habermas and Benhabib: while Habermas emphasizes an orientation towards the generalized other in moral-practical discourses, Benhabib does not agree that this precludes a concurrent orientation to the concrete other. The moral perspective taken up by discourse participants necessarily involves both other-regarding virtues and self-regarding virtues, and an intertwining of the two. This reciprocal recognition between self and other calls for attention to the specific conditions under which the autonomy of each individual is construed and constrained.

Attention to such conditions involves a conceptualization of the public sphere. The public/private dichotomy that Habermas sets forth is ignorant of those capacities for moral judgement that are "'always already' exercise[d] in virtue of being immersed in a network of human relationships that constitute our life together" (Benhabib 1992: 125). She also problematizes corresponding oppositions, such as right versus good, norms

versus values and "generalizable interests versus private need interpretations" (1992: 13). If the public sphere is that sphere of life where, through argumentation, individuals determine those norms of action whose outcomes could be acceptable to all concerned, then one must formulate an "acceptable and adequate description of [the] formal contraints on argumentation" (Benhabib 1992: 30). In doing so, Benhabib

> shift[s] the burden of the moral test in communicative ethics from consensus to the idea of an ongoing moral conversation... [and asks] not what all would or could agree to as a result of practical discourses to be morally permissible or impermissible, but what would be allowed and perhaps even necessary from the standpoint of continuing and sustaining the practice of the moral conversation among us. The emphasis now is less on *rational agreement*, but more on sustaining those normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement *as a way of life* can flourish and continue." (1992: 38)

This shift effectively blurs, and in some ways even dissipates, the boundaries between the public and private spheres that are outlined in the previous chapter. Not only are moral-practical discourses dependent upon the reproduction of meaning that occurrs within lifeworld contexts, but, as well, the capacities necessary for engaging in argumentation are themselves inherently and inextricably embedded in lifeworld contexts.

Where Habermas understands processes of moral justification to occur prior to the application of resulting prima facie valid norms (1993: 154), Benhabib posits that such an understanding does not adequately account for the issue of participation. Participating in moral-practical discourses involves a two-fold reflective capacity, in order to critically question the taken for granted traditions which have become problematized, as well as "an ability to articulate one's needs linguistically" (Benhabib 1985: 90). The latter must be recognized as constituent of moral reasoning in order to minimize the potential for repression; emancipation cannot be achieved at the expense of happiness. Therefore, the

connections between moral judgement and political judgement, between justice and solidarity, must be reformulated.

3.1 A post-metaphysical universalism

Benhabib's theoretical proposals involve the claim that universalism can be justified, but only by reformulating the Enlightenment project. In particular, rational justifications that are founded on Enlightenment ideas carry with them assumptions about the constitution of subjects, and the autonomy of rational judgement. She argues

> that the crucial insights of the universalist tradition in practical philosophy could be reformulated today without committing oneself to the metaphysical illusions of the Enlightenment. These are the illusions of a self-transparent and self-grounding reason, the illusion of a disembedded and disembodied subject, and the illusion of having found an Archimedian moral standpoint, situated beyond historical and cultural contingency. (Benhabib 1994: 174)

Subjects cannot escape the webs of relations and processes of socialization through which their identities are formed and maintained. However, by recognizing such an inevitability without complementing it with an explanation of the potential for moral justification, the universalist element that she claims can be redeemed would slide out of view. What Benhabib proposes is a post-metaphysical universalism, which involves "the principle that all human beings, by virtue of their humanity, are entitled to moral respect from others, and that such universal moral respect minimally entails the entitlement of individuals to basic human, civil, and political rights" (1994: 173). The controversy here is not so much in regards to potential interpretations of this claim, rather whether such a claim can be rationally justified.

In outlining a rational, post-metaphysical justification for her universalist claim, Benhabib first proposes a shift from the conception of reason as being "self-transparent

and self-grounded" to a "discursive, communicative concept of reason" (1994: 174), which she takes from Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas and builds on in *Situating the Self* (1992). The first of these conceptions of reason is based on the claim that truth is an attribute of human psychology or of objective reality, or "even to consist in the process by which 'givens' in consciousness [are] correlated with 'givens' in experience" (1992: 5). In other words, truth can be said to have a substance-like quality, that is realizable by a rationally developed human mind. Kant, as well as other theorists from Descartes to Rawls, describe the capacity to reason as though it arises from the human mind itself, as though such a capacity has no contingencies beyond the human subject. In fact, moral autonomy and the capacity for moral reasoning within such theoretical frameworks depends upon a decontextualization of the moral subject from the particularities of everyday life and attachments with others. Moral reasoning must be detached from those aspects of life that bind us to others, generate partial perspectives, and endanger the imperative of universalizability in moral judgement.

By contrast, reason as understood from a communicative theoretical framework arises within discursive processes. "In the discursive justification and validation of truth claims no moment is privileged as a given, evidential structure which cannot be further questioned" (Benhabib 1992: 5). The capacity for moral reasoning resides in the use of natural language. As outlined in the previous chapter, the universalizability of truth claims is achievable through processes of argumentation. Truth can be said to exist intersubjectively, that is truth claims can only be presented, examined, rejected and redeemed through interactive, communicative processes that engage a "community of inquirers" (C.S. Pierce in Benhabib 1992: 5). Orienting oneself toward mutual

understanding with others and cooperatively searching for truth are rational capacities that develop through, and are exercised in, actually discourses.

While Benhabib agrees with this post-metaphysical understanding of reason, there is an aspect, also discussed in chapter two, that Benhabib criticizes. In distinguishing between communicative acts and moral-practical discourses, Habermas proposes that moral judgement must be oriented towards all those who are potentially affected by the outcomes of such discourses, thus detaching moral judgement from particular life circumstances. The similarity between discourse participants regulates moral judgement; the outcomes of moral-practical discourses must reflect a general consensus among all those concerned in order for validity to be attached to truth claims. For Benhabib, there are at least two problems with this formulation of communicative rationality.

First, it confuses ethical cognitivism and ethical rationalism. She describes ethical cognitivism as "the view that ethical judgments and principles have a cognitively articulable kernel, that they are neither mere statements of preference nor mere statements of taste but that they imply validity claims" (1990: 355). In other words, a principle of action or a moral judgment can claim validity – can be said to be right – if good grounds can be used to justify why such a principle or judgment ought to be respected, upheld or agreed with (Ibid.). Ethical rationalism, on the other hand, is "a theoretical position which views moral judgments as the core of moral theory" (1990: 356). This latter perspective neglects the contingency of the rational-moral self, and the processes of socialization through which that self develops. Because ethical cognitivism recognizes validity as being grounded in the *exercise* of providing good reasons – which is an inherently cooperative exercise – it does not need to rely on an identification of

moral judgment as an individuated capacity. Presenting good reasons for respecting, upholding or agreeing with a particular principle could involve ethical aspects; in order to understand all relevant factors of any principle, participants in moral-practical discourses simultaneously recognize the general rights and the particular needs of one another.

Second, Benhabib believes that Habermas' principle of Universalizability (U) adds nothing but consequentialist confusion" (1990: 345). The principle of U is formulated as follows: "All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its *general* observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of *everyone's* interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation)" (Habermas 1990: 65). Benhabib's criticism of this principle, and of consent or social contract theories generally, is that truth or the validity of moral principles cannot be established by reference to consent alone. What is of interest for her, and she claims ought to be a key consideration for moral theory generally, are the conditions, or the "rationality of the procedures" (1990: 345) that lead to agreement. It is the fairness of the procedures of rational discourse, in the first instance, which grounds the validity of moral principles. The consequentialist character of the principle of U places it in close theoretical proximity to utilitarianism; rationally justifying the principle of U is a difficult task without importing certain assumptions about the conditions and procedures that are at play in any particular discursive event.

Rather than taking U to be a necessary element of a universalist discourse theory of justification, Benhabib claims that the presuppositions of argumentation are sufficient normative constraints. The derivation of the principles of universal moral respect and

egalitarian reciprocity is not difficult to discover; they are, in fact unavoidable.[13] "We contest them even when we take them for granted in some form or other, according to some formulation or other" (1994: 176). While there is an agreement between Habermas and Benhabib on this last point, Benhabib thinks that the inclusion of the principle of U in discourse ethics by Habermas carries with it historically contingent conceits about what constitutes the moral point of view. These conceits, as well as Benhabib's correctives, will be explored in the next section.

3.2 The 'other' and the moral point of view

The moral point of view, as formulated within a discourse ethics, is oriented towards the other. By Habermas' account, the other in moral-practical discourses is generalized. This generalized other refers to an unrestricted communication community, where norms for action are formulated through processes of argumentation; such norms are articulated as "rules for our collective coexistence in the face of continuing and permanent disagreement about our conceptions of the good and different ways of life which we choose to pursue and cherish" (Benhabib 1994: 181). It is for this reason that Benhabib agrees that an orientation toward the generalized other is indispensible" (1994: 182). However, she insists that this is not sufficient to determine moral validity. A distinction must be made between "the *moral standpoint* and the *standpoint of justice*" (1994: 181). Where Habermas conflates the two in proposing that moral judgments *are* judgments of justice, which regard the generalized other, Benhabib states that the moral point of view must also consider the concrete other.

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[13] This unavoidability was explored in more detail in chapter two.

The generalized and concrete other can be distinguished in several ways. To begin, while

> the generalized other requires us to view each and every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves... the concrete other... requires us to view each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution. (1992: 158-9)

The generalized other brings our commonalities into view; the concrete other highlights our differences. As well, through norms of formal equality and reciprocity the interaction between the self and the generalized other is predicated on rights and duties. One recognizes and respects the entitlements of the other and expects the same recognition and respect from the other in regards to one's own entitements. In contrast, the norms of interaction between the self and the concrete other are equality and complementary reciprocity, which are based on friendship, love and care. Such norms are exercised through responsibility, bonding and sharing; "[t]hese norms require in various ways that I exhibit more than the simple assertion of my rights and duties in the face of your needs" (Benhabib 1992: 158-9).

Benhabib's assertion here is that to neglect the concrete other in moral-practical discourse is also to ignore the moral content of daily conversations, which is "'always already' exercise[d by] virtue of being immersed in a network of human relationships that constitute our life together" (Benhabib 1992: 125). A recognition of the concrete other allows for a redefinition of the moral point of view: it is no longer that perspective that is gained only through a process of disengagement with the particularities of self and other, but becomes a twofold understanding of the other as both general and concrete. In order to understand how the other is, or potentially will be, affected by certain norms of action, one must be able to listen to and understand those relevant and specific aspects of

another's life and character which are affected. The application of moral norms to specific circumstances must occur after a process of justification, but the process of justification must also take account of the issues and persons to which such norms are meant to be applied, as well as how the formulation of those norms are influenced by the lifeworld contexts within which they arise.

We can explore this proposal further by paying attention to Benhabib's descriptions of reversability, universalizability and impartiality, which are important aspects of the moral point of view. She takes reversability to mean the taking of another's perspective. In modern society, where the potential for reversability is broadened to a larger community than what is immediately perceivable, such perspective-taking may be hypothetical. However, reversing one's perspective to be cognizant of an other, even hypothetically, involved knowledge of what that perspective might be, what it is perceiving, what matters are of concern and why. Likewise with universalizability. Benhabib states that

> 'Universalism' in morality implies first of all a commitment to the equal worth and dignity of every human being in virtue of her or his humanity; secondly, the dignity of the other as a moral individual is acknowledged through the respect we show for their needs, interests and points of view in our concrete moral deliberations... The universalizability procedure in ethics specifies a model of individual and collective deliberation and imposes constraints upon the kinds of justification leading to certain conclusions rather than specifying the moral domain itself. (1992: 185)

Thus, to judge impartially is not the same as judging from a neutral standpoint. Impartially can refer to the perspective that every individual has the same symmetrical rights to participate in moral-practical discourses. Such rights, when exercised, invariably involve concrete others.

If we conceive of the moral point of view as refering to "the 'know-how' of moral actors who have reached the postconventional stage of moral reasoning" (1990: 338), then there is no reason to believe that a definition cannot account for difference as well as commonality. Moral reasoning is a capacity that develops through processes of socialization. Just as such processes generate a capacity for enlarged thinking, which takes account of the interests of others who are not immediately present, those same processes socialize humans to regard others as individuals with particular needs, desires and histories. Benhabib points out that

> the more abstract the 'generalized other' is, the more concrete the concrete other can get. The less we as theorists smuggle certain identity definitions into the construction of the moral point of view, the more open and diversified will this construction be and the more capable of accommodating difference. (1994: 184)

Benhabib claims that an understanding of moral judgement as being a distinct capacity that cognitively separates general rights from particular interests is flawed, and it ignores the contribution that attitudes of care and responsibility make to the capacity for moral judgement. By identifying a dialectic between the general other and the concrete other in moral reasoning, this claim can be more clearly understood. Moral judgement "require[s] in various ways that I do, and that you expect me to do in the face of your needs, more than would be required of me as a right-bearing person" (Benhabib 1985: 94). Understanding the other in such a way challenges traditional distinctions between public and private spheres, and notions of the private sphere as implicated in moral judgement. The next section will outline those challenges.

3.3 A challenge to public/private distinctions and other oppositions

Benhabib wants to develop an "historically self-conscious universalism" (1990: 339), which involves an examination of the distinction made by Habermas and others between the public and private spheres. In particular, attention should focus on the gendered character of such a dichotomy. In chapter three of *Situating the Self* (1992), Benhabib introduces three strands of thought regarding models of the public sphere, after which she explains the strength of a feminist critique of the public/private dichotomy thus far described. First, Hannah Arendt conceives of the public as that sphere where "men act together in concert" (1992: 93). This is representative of republican models of publicity. Through such united action, which in Arendt's model is organized via reflexive public discussion, power is generated and sustained. Such power has the potential to counter force and violence. Such a model does have strengths, such as the description of the public as being a space of discussion, but also of a struggle between force and power. However, Arendt does not elaborate enough on how power may be justified, and, by extension, the issue of legitimacy is difficult to sort out through this model. By what conceptual tools are we to understand the difference between power and violence, and how might we ground a claim that some forms of power are legitimately exercised while others are not?

The liberal model places the issue of legitimacy centrally. Bruce Ackerman's version of liberalism asserts the necessity of bracketing certain themes from public discourse in order for participants to move forward with those issues that they may expect to come to an agreement about. Such "conversational restraint" (Benhabib 1992: 98) allows for different interest groups (whether those groups are organized around religious

belief, gender or class distinctions, or some other shared interest) to discuss issues of distributive justice and public policy so that no particular interest trumps another. Benhabib points out a few problems with this model, the most convincing being that by placing restraints upon public discourse, those issues that may be categorized as relating to distributive justice and public policy must already be understood by conversation participants. Benhabib counters that "[i]n part it is the unconstrained public dialogue that will help us define the nature of the issues we are debating" (1992: 98). She refers to this liberal model of the public sphere as "legalistic" (15) because it defines politics as neutral discussions regulating the coordination of disparate life forms.

Just as Arendt's model of public space is weak in terms of its capacity to say anything about justification and legitimacy, the liberal model, while it pays attention to the implicit force of majoritarianism in public discourse, does not appropriately account for the element of struggle in political discourse. Benhabib points out that

> [d]emocratic politics challenges, redefines and renegotiates the divisions between the good and the just, the moral and the legal, the private and the public. For these distinctions, as they have been established by modern states at the end of social and historical struggles, contain within them the result of historical power compromises. (1992: 99-100)

Habermas' model of discursive public space essentially combines both the previous models in an attempt to deal with the complexity of highly differentiated and plural societies.

As detail of Habermas' model of the public sphere has already been included in chapter two, only a brief outline will be presented here, more as a precurser to Benhabib's feminist reformulation. Habermas and Benhabib agree that the public sphere is where the legitimacy of norms and rules for action are discussed. All those affected by such norms and rules for action must be allowed, at least hypothetically, to enter the

public sphere. Public discourses are constrained not thematically, but procedurally, in that they are regulated by the two principles of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, these two principles imply, in terms of participation in public discourse, the ascription of basic human, civil and political rights. In other words, while the specific interpretation of what those basic rights entail can be exposed to public, or practical, discourses, they cannot be suspended. "When basic rights and liberties are violated, the game of democracy is suspended and becomes either martial rule, civil war or dictatorship" (Benhabib 1992: 107). These latter forms of rule cannot be rationally justified because they work merely through force, not reason.

Benhabib is not so much in disagreement with Habermas' conception of the public sphere as she is critical of what such a conception implies about the private sphere. The assumption is that while issues of justice – that is, a determination of what the right norms for action in terms of the interests of all those affected is made through public discourse – are thematized in public discourse, issues related to the good life, which are not generalizable, and are amorphous and particular, are relegated to the private sphere.

Benhabib presents three dimensions of 'private' that are invoked in modern political theories: "privacy," "private rights" and the "private sphere" (1992: 108). First, privacy relates to those moral and religious decisions that individuals ought to be able to decide for themselves. Second, privacy rights relate to commodity exchange that is unrestrained by public bodies (or the state). Third, the private sphere is conceived of as the sphere of the household, of intimacy, of the meeting of daily needs. By conceiving of public discourses of justice as dealing solely with generalizable issues, two aspects of the private sphere are ignored. First, because the private sphere has been the traditional

realm in western societies of women's work, the differences between mens' and womens' experiences are not viewed as relevant for moral deliberation. These differences are important because they illuminate the exclusivity of the public sphere to those matters that traditionally affect mens' lives. This goes to the second aspect: setting up such a division between public and private ignores the power relations that adhere in the private sphere (Benhabib 1992: 109). An explicit delineation of issues of justice and issues of the good life effectively brackets off those power relations in the private sphere from public discussion.

Such a exclusive division between the public and the private spheres relates also to private rights. A gender division of labour refers to a distinction between those activities that occur in the public sphere, which are part of material reproduction, and those activities that occur in the private sphere, which are concerned with social reproduction or socialization. While rules that govern the former are negotiated through public discourse, the latter are activities that occur outside of public purview. Consequently, women's work – or the work of socialization – is unrecognized and unrenumerated, and, likewise, is not susceptible to publicly negotiated rules.

Benhabib proposes a problematization of the public/private dichotomy. She recognizes that the women's movement has had some success in bringing themes related to the private sphere into public discourse. However, the public relevance of many 'private' issues remain unproblematized. The normative foundation of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity upon which the discourse model rests "cannot preclude the democratization of familial norms and of norms governing the gender division of labour... [d]istinctions such as between justice and the good life, norms and values,

interests and needs are 'subsequent' and not prior to the process of discursive will formation" (Benhabib 1992: 110). It is precisely through moral-practical discourse that the boundaries between universalizable norms and individual conceptions of the good life are sorted out (Benhabib 1990: 350).

3.4 Moral judgement, interaction and participation

Many domains of life involve judgment. Aside from political and moral judgment, medicine, art, music and military are some examples of matters that require judgment. Though, as was discussed in the previous section, the boundary between making judgments on these matters and moral and political judgment is itself to be of moral concern, Benhabib describes the distinctive character of both political judgment and moral judgment. Judging matters such as medicine and military require expert or practitioner knowledge, which can be distinguished from lay knowledge. Political judgment "from the standpoint of a theory of democracy... cannot be relegated only to experts" (1992: 125). The whole range of models of democracy, from representative to participatory, necessarily involves the exercise of political judgment by all citizens, whether it be exercised through a vote or through more participatory activities.

Moral judgment is different again. Benhabib states that "the exercise of moral judgement is pervasive and unavoidable; in fact, this exercise is coextensive with relations of social interaction in the lifeworld in general" (1992: 125). Moral judgment and social membership are so tightly enmeshed that one cannot exit from making daily moral judgments; to do so would be equivalent to exiting the social world altogether. Action is distinguished from mere behaviour through the use of language, through

speech. The capacity to speak also implies the capacity to reflect upon one's own thoughts, feelings and experiences (1992: 126). By speaking and acting, a person reveals their individuality to a community of others, by interacting with others.

> Once we see moral action as interaction, performed toward others and in the company of others, the role of judgment emerges in at least three relevant areas of moral interaction. These are the assessment of one's duties, the assessment of one's actions as fulfilling these duties, and the assessment of one's maxims as embodied, expressed, or revealed in actions. (Benhabib 1992: 127)

Moral judgement infuses action with a social dimension. This social dimension, as discussed in the previous section, cannot be viewed as unproblematic vis-à-vis public discourse. By participating in social life, one both develops as a moral being and imports their moral capacity into daily interactions.

But how is this any different from Hannah Arendt's conception of participation in the public sphere? If interaction is viewed merely as the pairing of action with speech, how can we account for ideological and hegemonic forms of legitimation, which work to sustain inequality and violence? Benhabib explicates her own position:

> Political ideologies as well as more subtle forms of cultural hegemony have always sought to make plausible the continuation of violence and power to those who most suffered from their consequences. When such ideology and hegemony no longer serve to justify such relations, then struggles unto death for moral recognition can follow. As a critical social theorist, the philosopher is concerned with the unmasking of such mechanisms of continuing political ideology and cultural hegemony; as a moral theorist, the philosopher, has one central task: to clarify and justify those normative standards in the light of which such social criticism is exercised. (1990: 340).

In returning to the unavoidable presuppositions of argumentation, which assume the principles of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity, participation in moral-practical discourses provides the justification for moral norms. These principles involve the exercise of an enlarged mentality and representative thinking, where one anticipates

communication with others, whose points of view must also be anticipated and represented in moral consideration (Benhabib 1992: 9). The differences among individuals, as well as their potential commonalities, provide the details for such anticipatory exercises. It is only by upholding basic human, civil and political rights that individuals may have the opportunity to articulate their points of view within processes of moral justification, and deepen their understanding of the complexity of moral insight. Entrance into processes of argumentation allows debate about not only the interpretation and scope of those basic rights, but also the relevance of all themes for public deliberation. Issues of justice are not distinctively moral; notions of the good, interpretations of needs and the concreteness of others all have relevance for our individual and collective understanding of morality and moral justification.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis both critically examines those tendencies of automobility that operate hegemonically and proposes a Benhabibian reconstruction of Habermas' discourse ethics as a theoretical framework to justify such a critique. I use this framework for understanding 1) the pragmatic dimension of moral capacities, 2) the justification of moral claims as arising from rational procedures of discourse, and 3) the socio-political implications of disrupted communicative action. My intention is to make an argument for the claim that automobility is antithetical to the development and maintenance of our capacities for moral conversation, and that there are potentially serious consequences in the form of social crises.

In chapter one I provide descriptions of three tendencies which are implicit in automobility literature. Those three tendencies are 1) the infrastructure provisions that are required by the automobile generate dispersed and fragmented opportunities for interaction between social members; 2) the identity of the car-driver is simultaneously part of a larger complex of roads, signs, and rules, and tied to the automotive machine itself, so that individuals relate to one another more as hybridized objects rather than as human subjects; and 3) the substantive issues related to automobility are privatized. In other words, the ability to bring automobility, as a social problem, into public discussion is hindered by a perception that it involves personal, private and individual concerns – specifically of taste, daily caretaking and economic liberty.

In chapter two I outline the connections made in Habermas' discourse ethics between communication, rationality and justification. By outlining the unavoidable

presuppositions of argumentation, he illuminates the rational potential immanent in language. It is through processes of communication with others that we develop the capacities for critical self-reflection, moral insight and an enlarged mentality. Further, because social integration depends upon argumentation games actually being played out, an intense degree of systemic integration of communicative processes leads to distortions.

> Systematically distorted communications express a potential for conflict that cannot be completely suppressed but is not supposed to become manifest. On the one hand, the structure of communication is deformed under the pressure of conflicts that are not carried out because the validity basis of speech is damaged. On the other hand, and simultaneously, this deformed structure stabilizes a context of action that, although charged with the potential for conflict, constrains and to some extent immobilizes that potential. Thus we are dealing with conflicts that can be neither openly carried out nor resolved consensually, but that smolder on with the effect of distorted communication. (Habermas 2001: 155)

With Habermas, I found the theoretical material with which to begin conceptualizing, articulating and justifying my claims about the disruptive effects of automobility. However, the following questions remain: 1) how can distorted communication be identified, and 2) how can those distortions be countered? Benhabib's criticisms of Habermas' formulation of discourse ethics helped me to address these questions, and in so doing, strengthened my critique of automobility.

Benhabib proposes that we assess the rationality of the procedures of discourses as a measure of justifiability. In chapter three I explicate her argument. The definition of the moral point of view in Habermas' formulation disregards the moral relevance for the conditions of moral-practical discourses of particular identities, experiences, knowledge and themes. An expanded mentality is essential for moral judgement, and such a capacity involves the recognition of both general and concrete others. Benhabib states that

> the evolution of self-other relations is always accompanied by the development of self-understanding and self-evaluation, and if justice is the

> sum of *other-regarding* virtues par excellence, this still does not preclude the consideration of *self-regarding* virtues and their significance for moral theory. (1992: 72)

The conditions and processes of socialization through which one develops as a morally competent individual, capable of participating in practical-moral discourses, must also be critically examined. In assessing the normative standards of discourse the manner in which discursive interaction between participants unfolds, and the themes that are problematized, must be considered.

Here, I am problematizing automobility, not merely as a technological form that has detrimental effects upon the environment and communities, but as a system of mobility that generates conditions which are antithetical to what Benhabib refers to as the "discourse model of legitimacy" (1992: 82). Within this model, legitimacy rests on the expansion of "individuals' cognitive participation in various branches of knowledge which today have become the monopoly of experts, ... increasing the possibilities for meaningful life choices on the parts of individuals" (1992: 81). Much public policy reflects the view that the role of transportation services is to provide the means for flexible mobility in dealing with problems of social coordination. This role is supported by treating users (whether of roads for cars, public transit or walking and bicycling facilities) as consumers of mobility services. For instance, TVOntario aired a Studio 2 special on 'Gridlock' (2 January, 2006) during which the guests discussed the projected increase in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) population, and potential ways of dealing with transportation and landuse issues. There was a general agreement among the guests that the current dependency on the automobile for individual travel cannot be sustained, particularly if the population grows at the expected rate, and that solutions need to be sought and implemented. One of the guests explicitly stated that people need to be

thought of as consumers of a service; transportation plans, to be successful, ought to provide transit services that are fast, reliable, and comfortable in order to compete with the automobile as the primary mode of travel. The intention of such an approach is to *entice* people to use modes other than the automobile, rather than *coerce* them through government restrictions or impositions. However, the view that these are the only two approaches available is more a consequence of existing institutionalized political practice – whereby public planning responds to individual life choices rather than developing through cooperative processes of deliberation – than it is a reflection of real potential for choice.

There is a problem with using the criteria associated with automobile use to measure the viability of other modes of transportation. The character of the problem is different for automobility than it is for other modes of transportation. On the one hand, the crux of automobility is to enhance the flexibility of individual mobility, which is meant to allow for more differentiated arrangements of life. However, the objective of increasing mobility leads to dependency, and staid life patterns. The more that investments support one mode of transportation, the more dependent a population or region is on that mode. In Windsor, for instance, not only is it extremely difficult to access many areas of the city without a car (with spread out development patterns and an underfunded mass transit system), but, as well, the majority of residents in this area depend on the automotive industry, either directly or indirectly, for their livelihood. Rather than increasing diversity of life arrangements, individuals are embedded further in patterns of increased mobility; life is arranged in order to meet the requirements of ever-intensifying mobility.

On the other hand, other modes of transportation are meant to provide for the most effective means for accessing daily life activities. An effective transportation system is one that actually minimizes mobility requirements, so that one can spend more time engaged in other aspects of their life. Specifically, transportation planners who have a sincere desire to curb the current predominance of the automobile, and shift to an integration of diverse modes, have a hard time figuring out whether to put large investments into public transit in the hopes that they can entice users (which, in the long term, would legitimate the original investments) or to find other ways of increasing use in order to boost revenue that would be spent on improvements to the system (or other systems such as non-motorized and pedestrian). Students at the University of Windsor are currently in negotiations with Transit Windsor to formulate an agreement for a tuition-based bus pass. A large part of the debate so far has gone along these lines: students claim that the transit system is too poor to be a viable alternative to the automobile. Before students pay for the service, regardless of the cost, the system should provide a level of mobility worth paying for.

While, on the face of it, this argument makes sense, the over-consumption of services related to automobility – which occurs when drivers do not pay the full costs of using automobiles – results in an extreme imbalance in favour of investments in roads and parking space, suburban growth, industrial development, and subsidiary services over investment in public transit, or other, non-automotive, facilities. In such a place, people, especially those who cannot own or operate a car, need to be provided with viable alternatives to the automobile in order to access dispersed sites. However, the viability of other modes relies on alternative spatial arrangements, including investments in other

forms of infrastructure. Such alternatives would, in turn, make the automobile an untenable mode of transportation.

A shift to other modes of transportation is difficult because of the investments in infrastructure that the automobile requires, as well as the economic roles and relations that arise. When individual choice is understood as existing prior to any deliberative processes, and as rational in its own right, free from the impositions of others, public policy is constrained by efforts to assist in dealing with the consequences of dependency, rather than the causes. The potential for moral insight that would adhere in practical-moral discourses is replaced by pre-formed courses of action that mask their own contradictions. It is only by recognizing the rational potential immanent in language that we can hope to shift tracks. If we perceive the disruptive effect that automobility has upon our ability to engage in reasoned conversation (an ideal of participatory democracy), then changing mobility practices must come about through investigations of what is and who are excluded from public discussion. Likewise, the bases upon which mobility practices are formed and enacted need to be thematized in moral conversation.

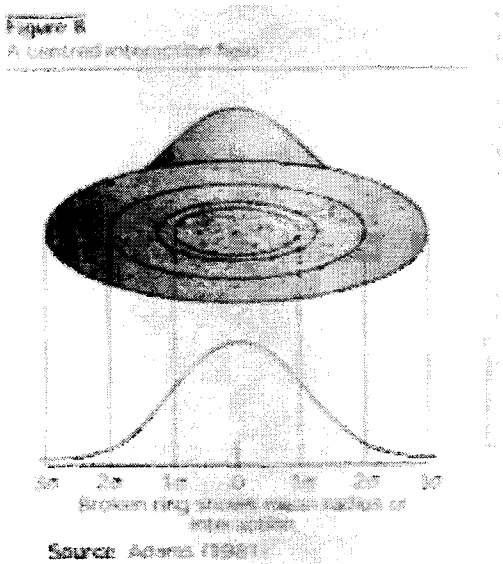
This would require actual opportunities for participation in the formulation of public discourses, which would involve paying attention to the ways in which participation takes place. On one hand, if participation is enacted predominately in the form of consumer activity, then it will be atomized and competitive, and lead to the contradiction discussed above. If, on the other hand, regular and sustained face-to-face interaction is maximized, then participation will seek to enjoin others in a cooperative search for alternatives. As Benhabib states,

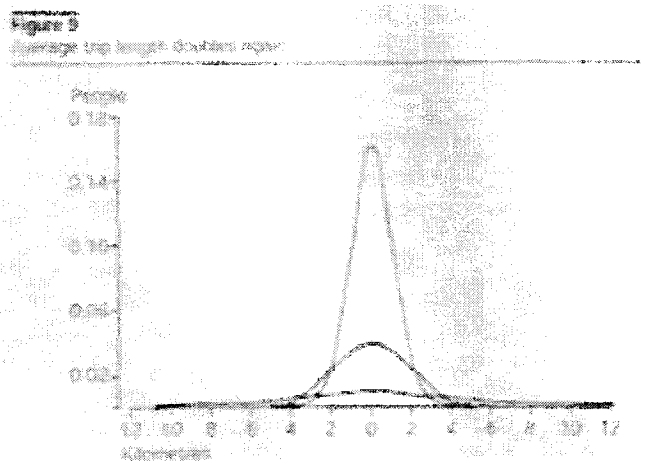
> it is likely that a very atomized society will undermine options and motivation for political agency, while a vibrant, participatory life can

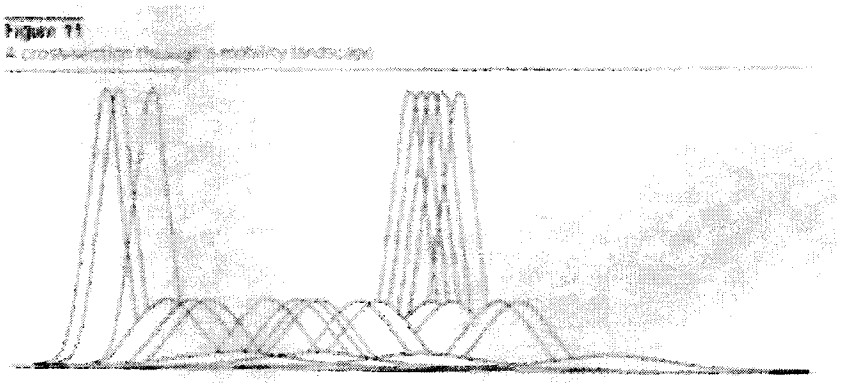
> become central to the formation and flourishing of one's self identity. Equally, while the prevalance of certain kinds of public value systems will make the participationist model more or less likely, an increased sense of public-political agency and efficacy will contribute to the revitalization of certain kinds of values. (1992: 81)

It is the role of the critical social theorist to examine how such contributions may be inserted. The priorities and justifications of existing policy must be challenged. In terms of mobility practices and services, prioritizing flexible mobility as a good to be maximized subordinates other forms of social action to that purpose, while systems that minimize mobility reflect a priority of enhancing participatory life, which, in turn, involves increased communicative action. Automobility is problematic for the very reason that it disrupts communicative action, and the justificatory force of discourse.

APPENDIX A: Adams' 'time-space dome'







APPENDIX B: Urry's table of 'instantaneous time'

Table 1: Instantaneous Time
information and communication changes which allow information and ideas to be instantaneously transmitted and simultaneously accessed across the globe
development of automobility which breaks down the public time of the time-table
technological and organisational changes which dissolve distinctions of night and day, working week and weekend, home and work, leisure and work
the increasing disposability of products, places and images in a 'throwaway society'
the growing volatility and ephemerality in fashions, products, labour processes, ideas and images
a heightened 'temporariness' of products, jobs, careers, natures, values and personal relationships
the proliferation of new products, flexible forms of technology and huge amounts of waste often moving across national borders
growth of short-term labour contracts, what has been called the just-in-time workforce, and the tendency for people to develop 'portfolios' of tasks
the growth of 24 hour trading so that investors and dealers never have to wait for the buying and selling of securities and foreign exchange from across the globe
the increased 'modularisation' of leisure, education, training and work
extraordinary increases in the availability of products from different societies so that many styles and fashions can be consumed without having to walk to travel there
increased rates of divorce and other forms of household dissolution
a reduced sense of trust, loyalty and commitment of families over generations
the sense that the 'pace of life' throughout the world has got too fast and is in contradiction with other aspects of human experience
increasingly volatile political preferences

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